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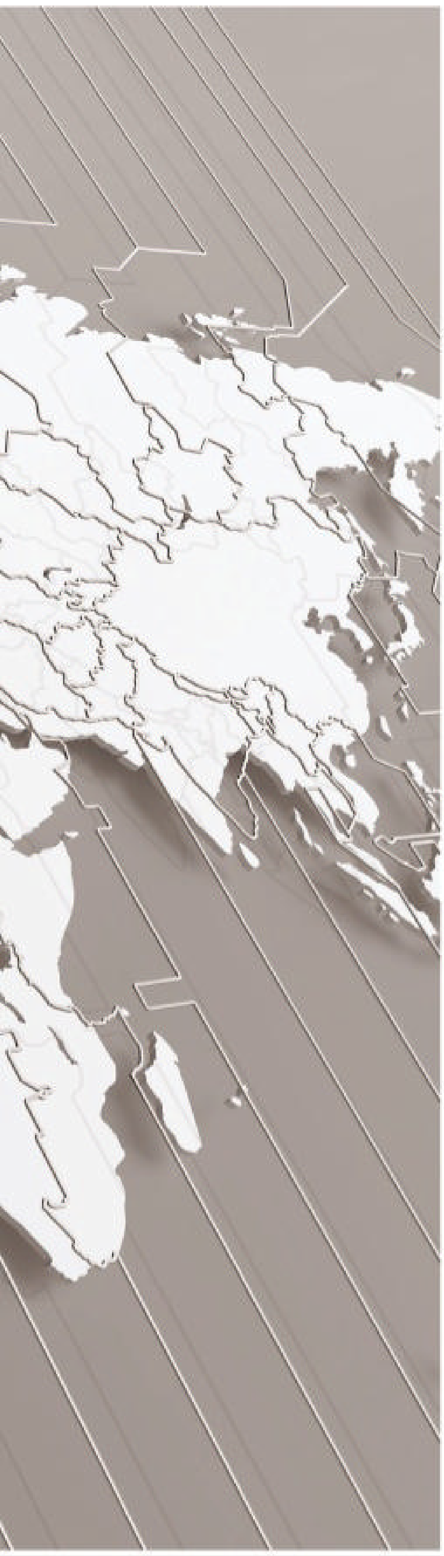

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We've all spent a lot of time indoors these past few years. For some of us, that meant baking more bread or making the transition to work-from-home; for others, it meant becoming caregivers and caretakers.

For many of us, these new roles have come with a greater appreciation of our interior spaces — how important it is that our rooms are designed thoughtfully and function smoothly. And whether you're a fan of feng shui or Joanna Gaines, you know the positive effect a well-designed space can have on our productivity, our sleep, and the time we spend with our families.

The Ottawa Hospital has been giving interiors a lot of thought, too. The rooms you or your loved ones will rely on for help and to heal if you ever have to stay — the rooms where some of the most important conversations you will ever have, will happen. The rooms that sometimes become a home away from home.

In December, the hospital unveiled a stunning patient room concept for the new campus development on Carling Avenue. Each is an airy, uncluttered space, flooded with natural light and designed to improve comfort and outcomes for every patient. They are an inspirational example of functional interior design, and after the last few years, should we settle for anything less in the spaces that matter most?

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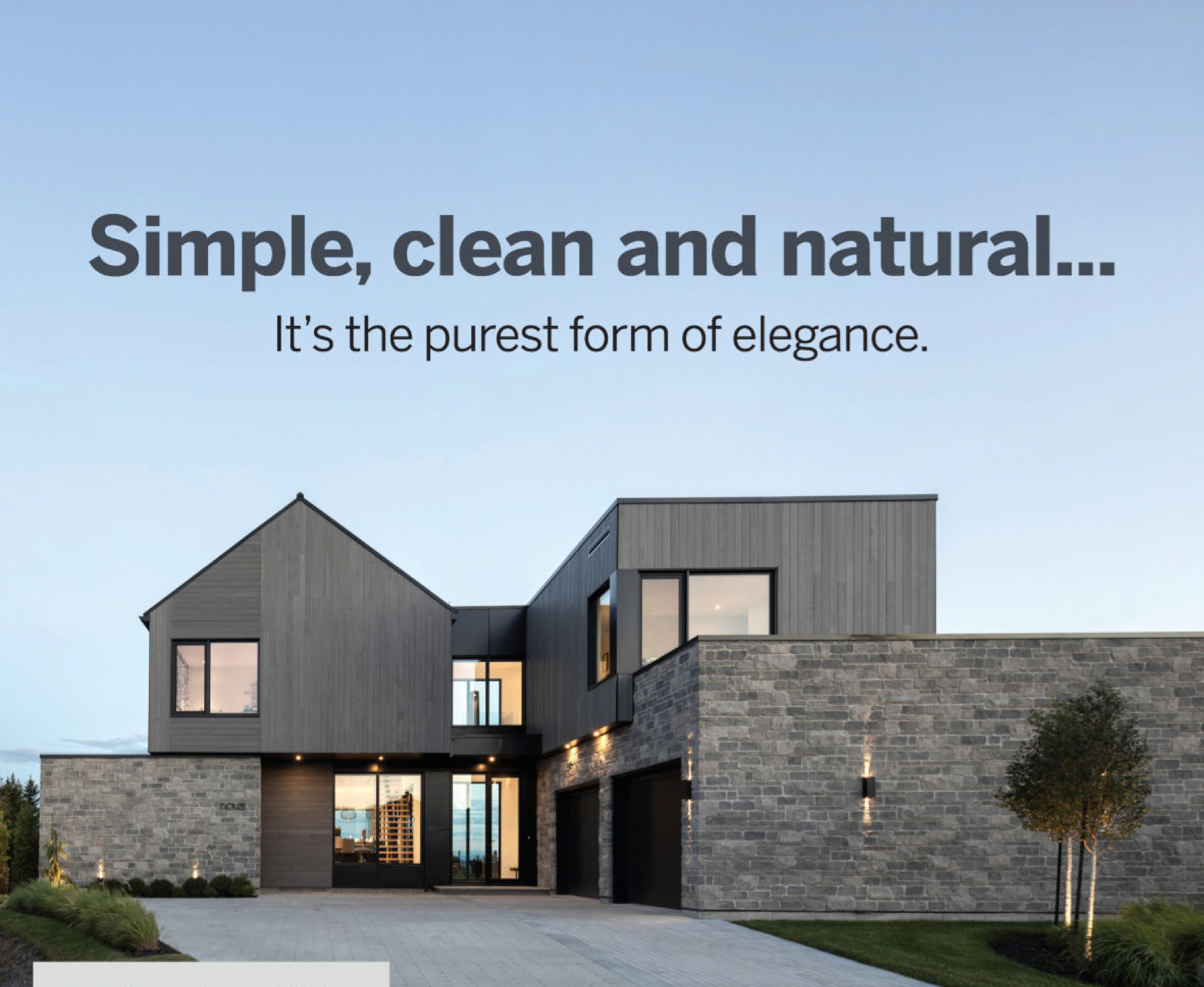

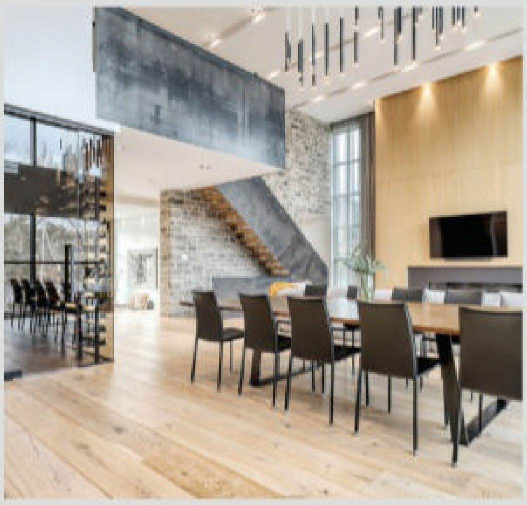

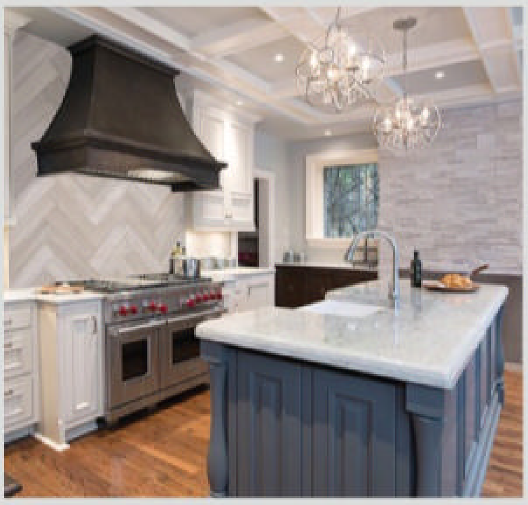

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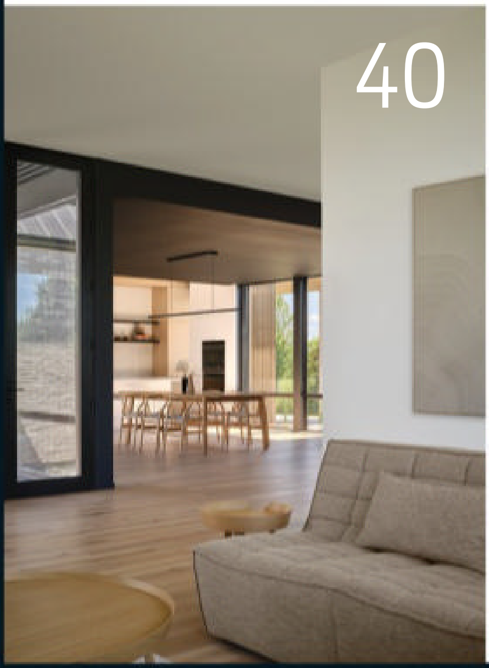

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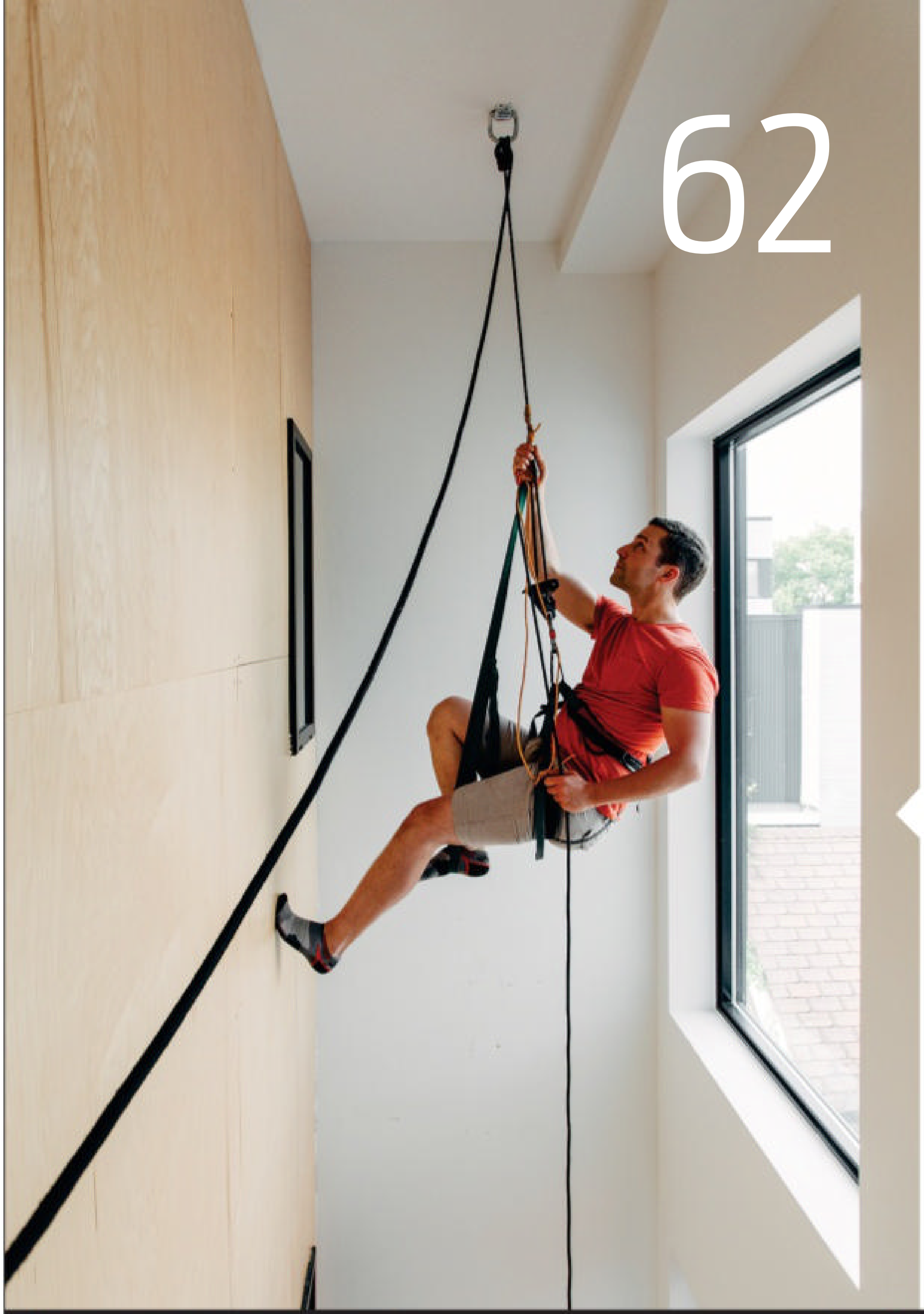

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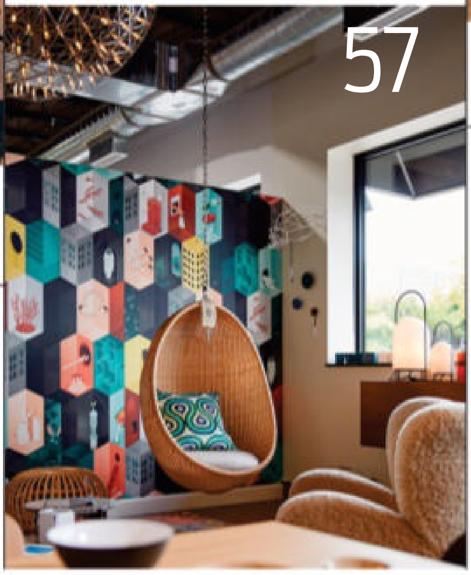

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This Issue | By Dayanti Karunaratne

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMIE KRONICK

Weaving together our annual *Interiors* edition is always an exciting proposition. We must figure out months ahead of time which spectacular homes will be ready in time for a photographer and writer to tour. It's a juggling act to find a mix of styles and locations, and get homeowners on board with the idea of opening their private spaces to all this entails. The nail-biting process seems similar to the overwhelming feelings conveyed by those undertaking renovations and custom builds. It's fun, but it's not without anxious moments.

This year, we have three elaborate renovations close to the core — a heritage restoration project in Centretown, a fabulous York Street townhouse that combined two units, and a quirky modern addition in Hintonburg. There are also two new contemporary homes — one in the Carlingwood neighbourhood and one in the booming village of Manotick — that represent the bold architectural trends residents are embracing right now.

While the styles and locations of these homes represent a wide range of lifestyles, one unique theme emerged: family. Not just the people sheltered in these houses, but also in the design and execution of the projects themselves. Pamela Bowles was looking for a house downtown for her and her two young children. Low stock, high prices, and a willingness to partner with her parents put her in a position to renovate their lovely, but dated, Centretown red-brick house. She has filled it with art collected by her grandmother, paintings by her mother, and furniture made by her grandfather. In exploring the family home and its history, Pamela has fallen in love with interior design. In January, she began coursework to become certified as an interior designer.

Over in Carlingwood, where Isabelle and Pietro Borracci have built a stunning modern home, the family ties continue: Isabelle's father, François LeBlanc, spent his career advising international organizations such as UNESCO and the Getty Institute of Conservation on the preservation of monuments and historical sites, and held the role of chief architect with the National Capital Commission for seven years. Isabelle, who is now a graphic designer, says her father's expertise made a big impact on her. By visiting old churches and heritage buildings with his daughter, François passed down a love for design and architecture that lives on through a new structure — the home they created together.

The family theme extends to Hintonburg, where one family worked hard to keep costs down, preserve an old house, and have some fun along the way. And in Manotick, one family continues to make an impression: two years ago, we featured a custom house in in the same area built by Mateusz Nowacki for his cousin. In "Cool Cabin" (page 40), we see his bold work again, this time in the form of a Nordic-style bungalow built for his brother and business partner Lukasz Nowacki. In the end, this issue highlights the fantastic results that come about when family members collaborate.

Speaking of great collaborations, our team at *Ottawa Magazine* is seeing some shifts. Duncan Clark, our publisher for the past five years, is moving on, into a position as chief content officer with Postmedia. Clark was not only a keen voice at every editorial brainstorming session, but also the senior vice president of product innovation for our parent company St. Joseph Communications, leading innovative campaigns for big clients. He brought a playful pragmatism to our team, as well as a tireless dedication to creating excellent magazines, and he will be missed. Taking the helm is Maryam Sanati, former editor of *Chatelaine* and senior editor at the *Globe and Mail*, as well as the senior vice president of content and creative at St. Joseph Communications. I have spoken with Sanati, around a table crowded with magazines, about the successes of *Toronto Life* and I'm looking forward to building great pages with her in the upcoming issues of *Ottawa Magazine*.

Dayanti Karunaratne, **CONSULTING EDITOR**
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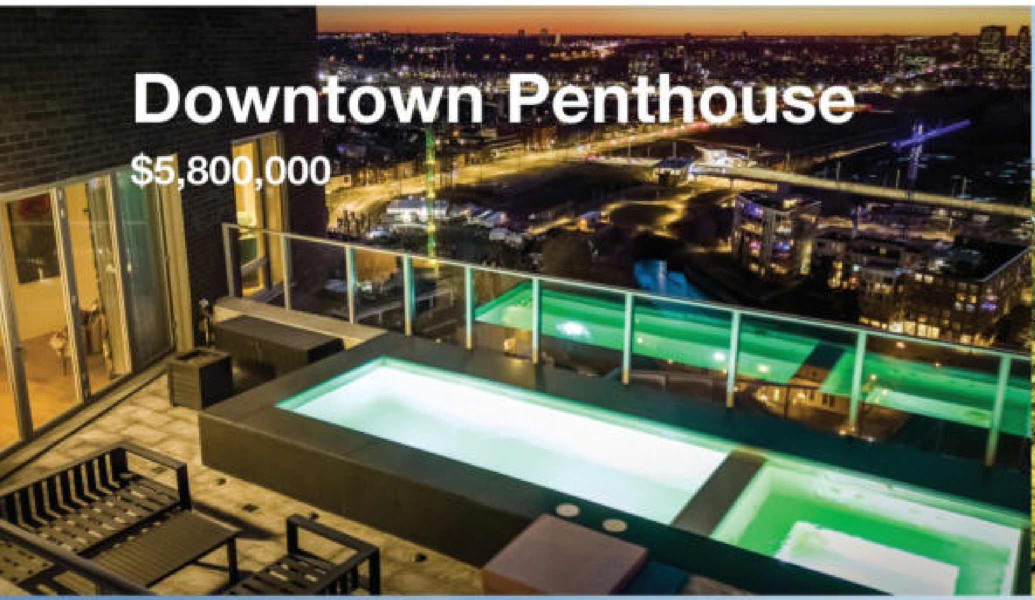

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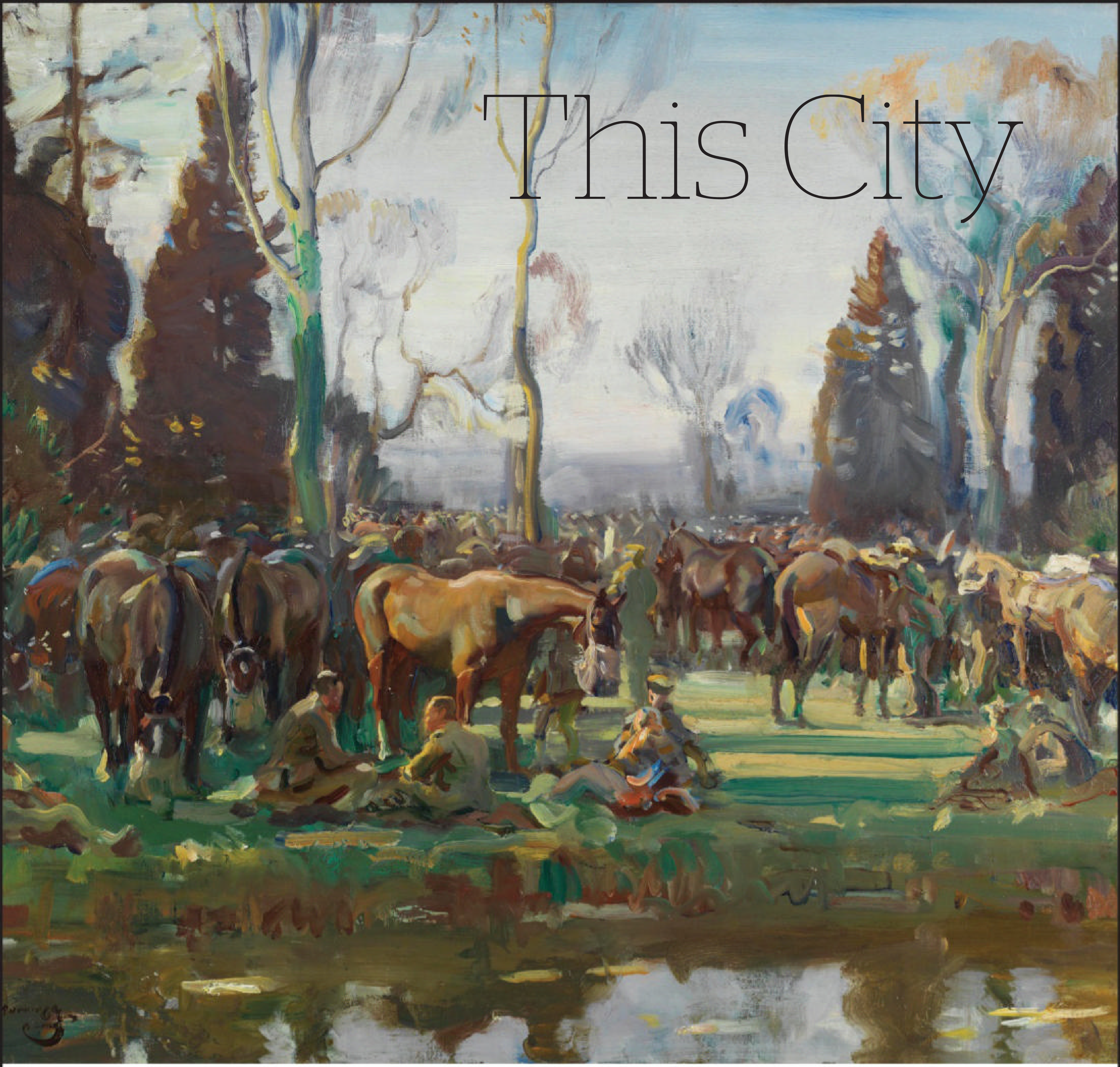


HALT ON THE MARCH BY A STREAM AT NESLE, ALFRED MUNNINGS, 1918. BEAVERBROOK COLLECTION OF WAR ART, CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM, 19710261-0445

The View From Here | Horse Power

THE FIRST WORLD WAR OFTEN EVOKES IMAGES of bleak and desolate landscapes, of desperate men, covered in mud, huddled in a trench. The Sir Alfred Munnings exhibition at the Canadian War Museum offers something completely different: an artist's interpretation of war and the horse's role within it.

An experienced equine artist, Munnings was hired to paint the experience of Canadian soldiers in 1918. While there are traditional cavalry scenes, the soft colours and natural beauty of the animals allows the viewer to contemplate war in new ways. Glimpsing a herd of horses in a splendid meadow, while men lounge by the waterside gives a new perspective on war on the Western Front.

By 1919, some 25,000 horses and donkeys had been used by the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Many would suffer from lack of food, water, and the continuous danger of warfare.

Munnings' art takes his sensibility for English pastoral scenes and brings it to the horrors of trench warfare. His scenes capture the bleakness of combat, as well as the relative peace that was found only a few miles from the front. He produced more than 40 paintings over the course of that year, including portraits that show a striking eye for detail.

Also part of the series is a group of paintings depicting the Canadian Forestry Corps, which was removed from the dreariness of the front lines. These depictions of men and horses hauling lumber and building mills under a blue sky stand in contrast to his earlier paintings of the blasted landscapes.

In an age before colour photography was practical, paintings like Munnings' give us some of the clearest windows into wars of the past. Seeing the lives of the horses and soldiers on canvas across these 43 paintings is a rare view into another century you don't want to miss. — *Robert Hiltz*

Q & A | Ben Barry

He is the dean of fashion at the Parsons School of Design in New York City, one of the most distinguished fashion schools in the world. And it all started in Ottawa. **Adrian Harewood** talks with Ben Barry about starting a business at 14, studying fashion at Cambridge University, and the Ottawa advantage

You've now been dean for 18 months. How is it going?
It's been really fun. It's been exciting to bring everything I've learned at home into a New York context, and into an American-based design school.

And what is that you're bringing to the table – from Ottawa?
As dean, I feel my two main roles are thinking around vision and pedagogy and research and what's driving the field of fashion forward. The second piece is how to foster community and do that by holding space to ensure people feel, seen, heard, and held. And so much of how I think people feel seen and are valued, I've learned from growing up in Ottawa, from working in Toronto, from those really unique contexts and experiences that I apply every day now in my work.

What is it that is so unique about Ottawa?
Ottawa is, for me, an international city with a small-town feel. You're having a chance to engage and meet people who are in the city from around the world and bring such rich, diverse perspectives. But there's also this deep kinship and network that happens in this community, whether it's on your street, whether it's with people you know. Folks may have been there for six months or for generations. I think being able to foster community and hold space with that range of people is just a unique thing of being from Ottawa that informs what I do now.

How did you get interested in fashion and how did you start a modelling agency at 14?
I must give a lot of credit to my family who has always let me be myself, and to play and explore. I think of being four years old and going through my grandmother's kitchen drawers and turning a tea cozy into a hat, or an apron into a skirt, and just imagining the incredible power and potential of fashion, which I did not realize was fashion at that point. My modelling agency began when one of my friends told me she couldn't model because she was too big. Taking her photos and getting her a job in Ottawa gave me the confidence that I could be a modelling agent – and a belief that no one should be excluded based on their body. And that fashion really should represent people who looked like my friends and family and their families. The full panorama of human beauty.

> **"From the moment I was born I was supported to try things"**

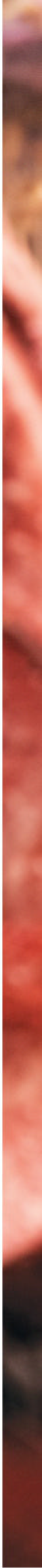
What made that precocious 14-year-old think he could be an agent of change??
I feel that right from the moment I was born I was supported to try things. I don't know how many schools would be super supportive of a high school student running a modelling agency, using the payphone, and putting in quarters during breaks to call fashion editors or marketing managers and try to book models. The support to follow my own journey with my business — being encouraged by the school and by the teachers in very real ways — gave me confidence and tenacity. I had the privilege of being in spaces where the conditions to give me confidence were cultivated by other people. And that's by my family, by my friends, by my teachers, by communities in Ottawa.

Tell us about your experiences meeting people like fashion maven Jeanne Beker.
When I was in high school and running my modelling agency, Jeanne Beker and Fashion Television did a profile. They came to my school, Ashbury College, and they came to my office. It was very exciting because a major outlet that was covering fashion around the world was doing this story on this small Ottawa modelling agency! And at the same time, the *Oprah Winfrey Show* came to Ottawa, came to my office, and came to my high school and filmed my life. These stories were obviously amazing for my business, and they were super exciting for everyone, but particularly a teenager. They also were a testament to what could happen in Ottawa when people and organizations supported someone with what might seem like a wild idea.

Does Ottawa have style? And if so, what is it?
I think that there is the richness of all the places people are from in Ottawa that contributes to all the ways of dressing. It isn't always a flashy style. And it's certainly not a homogenous style, which might make it difficult for people to pinpoint. I don't think Ottawa is a conservative city. We just haven't centred fashion in a way that elevates how people are dressing in Ottawa. There's been different cultural industries that we've elevated.

That brings a larger question about how fashion has been considered superficial. When I was doing my PhD at Cambridge on fashion models and diversity, I had professors be like, "Fashion models? You mean the economic models of the fashion industry?" I'm like, "No, like the people in the ads on the runway. So much of my work has been around the fact that fashion is a hugely significant and influential part of not just the economy but of culture and of our everyday experience and our bodies.

From a design point of view, what are some of the spaces in Ottawa that inspire you?
I love that question! The outdoor seating area and steps outside the World Exchange Plaza. I appreciated how it created spaces for people to come together in a public space. I always remember being very inspired by how people moved in that space, and by the events that were organized. I wonder how those stairs could be made accessible, to allow more bodies to use them and be inspired by sitting on them.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN BUCKMASTER

Roundup | Falling Behind

By Robert Hiltz

Last year's inquiry showed the problems with the Stage 1 of the LRT, but what about Stage 2? The expansion of the light rail system will reach to Nepean and Bells Corners in the West and extend the old O-Train line, now called the Trillium Line, all the way to Riverside South. In the east, the LRT line will eventually end in Orléans. Bringing what we know of Stage 1, here's a look at how things are progressing in Stage 2.

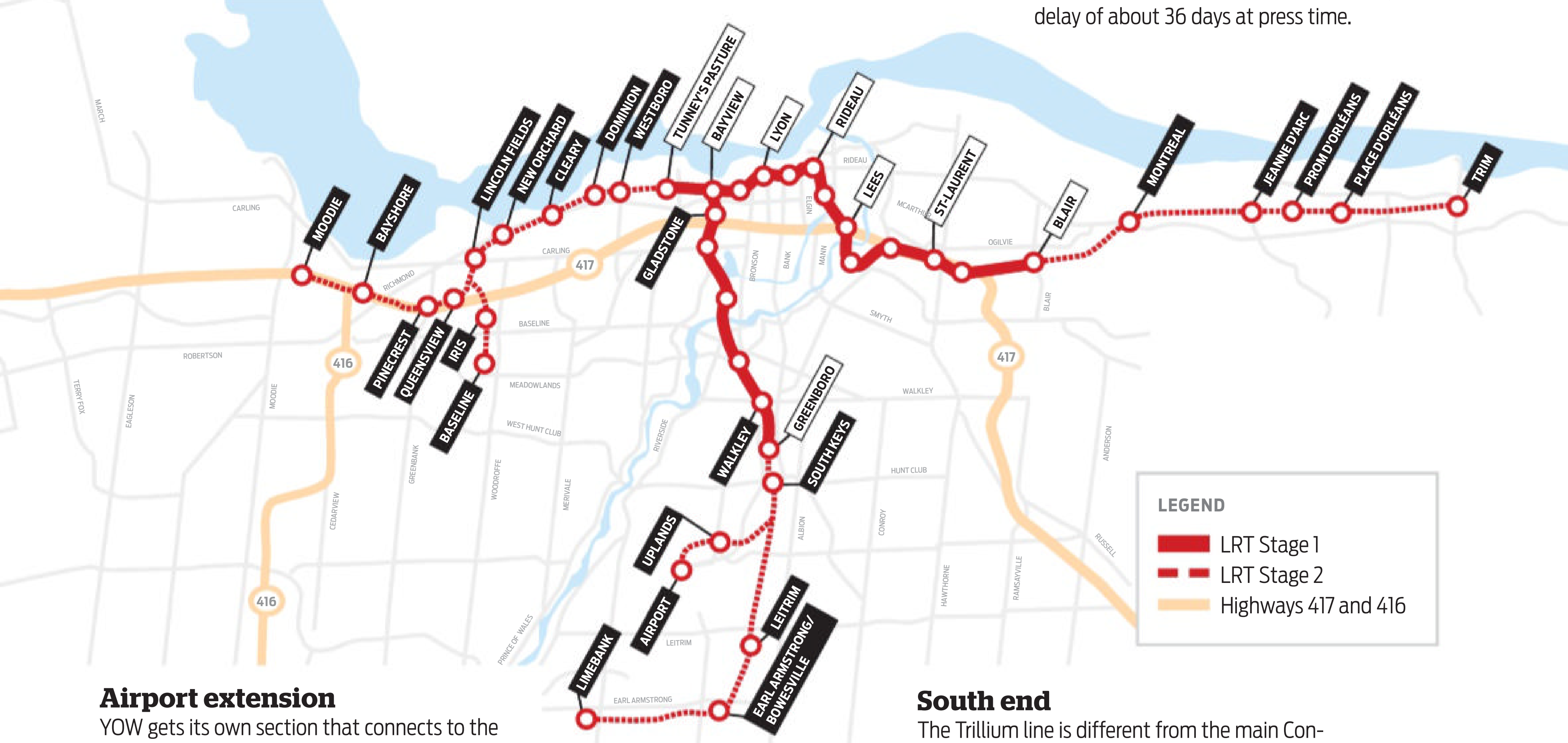
West end

The extension that will see stations open as far as Moodie and Baseline is nearly two years behind schedule. Like most construction projects, labour and supply chain issues have wreaked havoc on timelines. Additionally, builders have found the tunneling project more difficult than expected. Particularly in Westboro, where unexpected hydro and water infrastructure means the western stations won't open until late 2026.

PHOTO BY COLIN TEMPLE - ISTOCK

East end

Here, things are mostly on schedule. Where everywhere else delays are being measured in months or years, on this section of track we're only at a delay of about 36 days at press time.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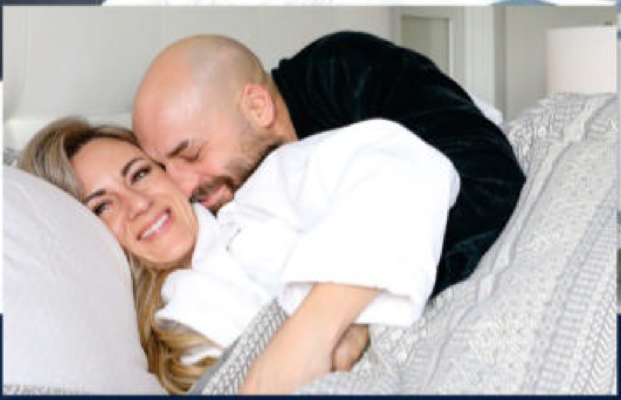
Airport extension

YOW gets its own section that connects to the southern reach of the Trillium Line. Like the rest of the line, it's not going to be open until at least late summer. Curiously, the city is still holding public consultations on a plan to widen the Airport Parkway — a plan that came together before the decision to bring rail to the airport had been made. Both projects seek to alleviate congestion on the parkway.

South end

The Trillium line is different from the main Confederation line. Instead of electric light rail, it uses a heavier diesel-powered train system. Most of the old O-Trains from the 2001 pilot project that ran on the line will be replaced with new Stadler FLIRT trains. The good news is some of these have already arrived from Switzerland for testing. The bad news: this part of the system was supposed to be open by now, instead, it's not expected to be open until August.



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Found | Water Babies

By Nickie Shobeiry

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg artist Dean Ottawa creates designs for the city's new swimming program

FOR 20 YEARS, DEAN OTTAWA has been working as an addictions counsellor and mental health worker in his community of Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation. He's also an artist, who prefers painting on paddles and rawhide rather than canvas.

"I think it's something that comes from my heritage in the Algonquin culture, where a lot of things like tools have incorporated Native designs on them," he says. "[I'm] pretty much just carrying on a tradition."

Ottawa's work can be spotted outside of City Hall: he designed commemorative artwork alongside his community acknowledging the city is on unceded territory, which was placed on a rock from the Pikwakanagan sFirst Nation. During the MosaïCanada exhibition, Ottawa designed some of the larger-than-life plant sculptures.

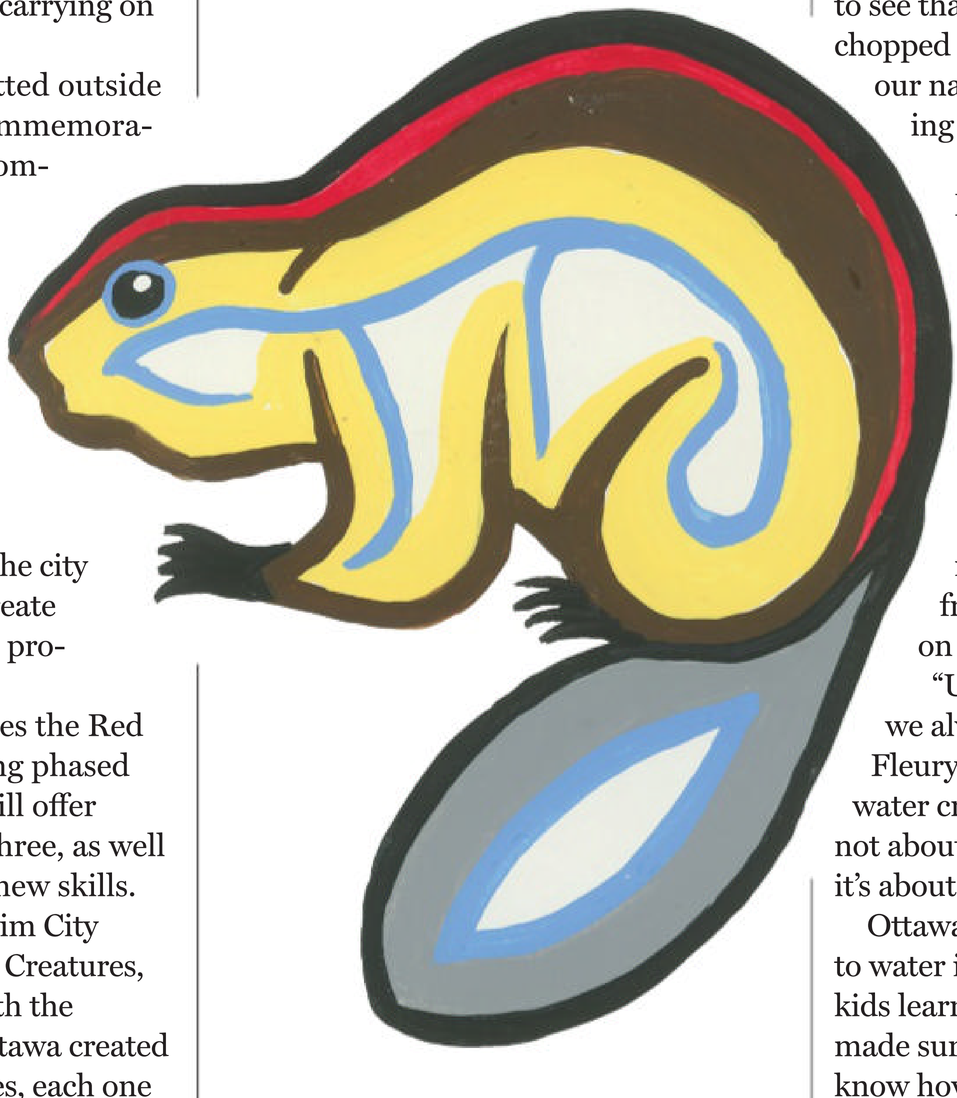
It's no surprise that when the city was looking for an artist to create badges for its new swimming program, they called Ottawa.

The new Swim City replaces the Red Cross program, which is being phased out by the organization. It will offer classes for kids as young as three, as well as adults looking to acquire new skills.

For preschool children, Swim City levels are split into five Swim Creatures, developed in consultation with the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg. Ottawa created the artwork for the five badges, each one depicting an animal that swims in the Ottawa River. Their names are written in the Anishinabemowin Algonquin language, English, and French.

Of all five designs, the loon and the beaver were Ottawa's favourite. He particularly enjoyed experimenting with the tones of the loon. For the beaver, "I could see these blue lines that I was [painting] as being the canals that beavers develop, going through the land."

Ottawa explains that the badges were created in "woodland style," a form of First Nations art. Typically he paints in a realistic style.



As he was drawing the images for Level 5, Dean Ottawa says he saw the blue lines representing the canals beavers build, winding through the landscape

No matter the style, Ottawa's favourite thing to paint are animals local to the region. He said, traditionally, communities would hold ceremonies for children, giving them the name of an animal. That animal then became the guardian spirit of that person, guiding them through life.

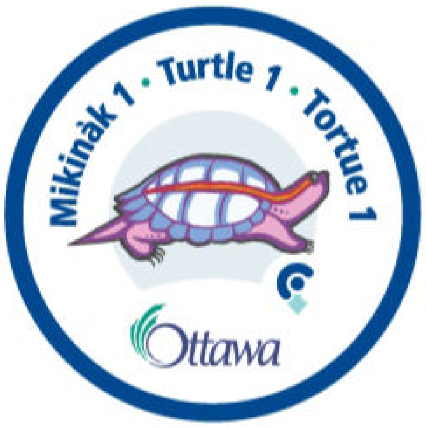
"A lot of our names stem from our culture going way back, before First Nations started getting registered with the government," Ottawa says. "It's good to see that although a lot of our names got chopped up, at least we know the roots of our names, and the important meaning behind them."

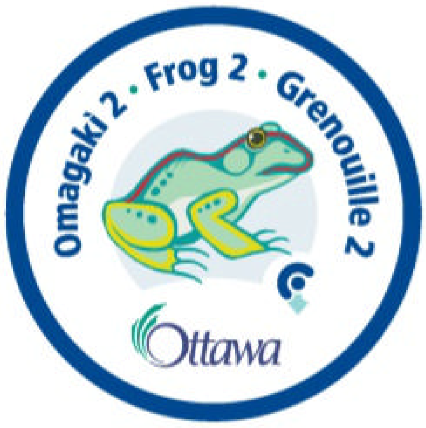
Former councillor Mathieu Fleury, also a former lifeguard, explains that, prior to amalgamation, the city did have its own preschool swimming program, making Swim City something of a full-circle moment.

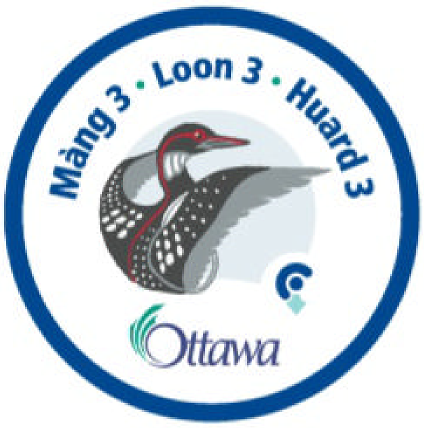
For Fleury, one of the differences between the old and the new program is the shift away from emphasizing skill level based on grades.

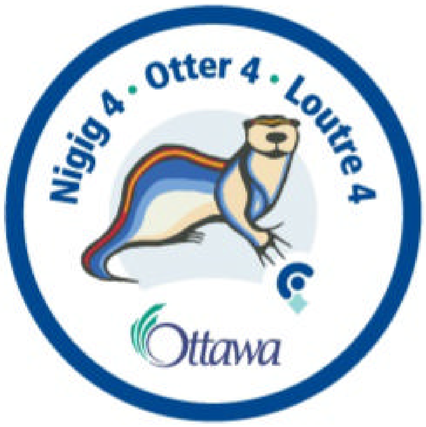
"Unfortunately, as human beings, we always try to move up a step," Fleury says. "Going with names of water creatures and colours [means it's] not about just completing the program — it's about acquiring skills throughout."

Ottawa says that, because of our access to water in Canada, it's important that kids learn how to swim. "We've always made sure our kids in the community know how to swim, because they spend a lot of time on the water," he says. "You can't have a fear of swimming, because it's a natural part of our environment where we live."









ARTWORK BY DEAN OTTAWA

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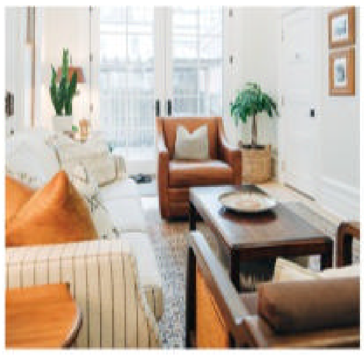


A Heritage Homecoming

By Janet Uren

Photography by Brendan Burden

Contemporary Cabin

By Patrick Langston

Photography by Doublespace Photography

Simplified Luxury

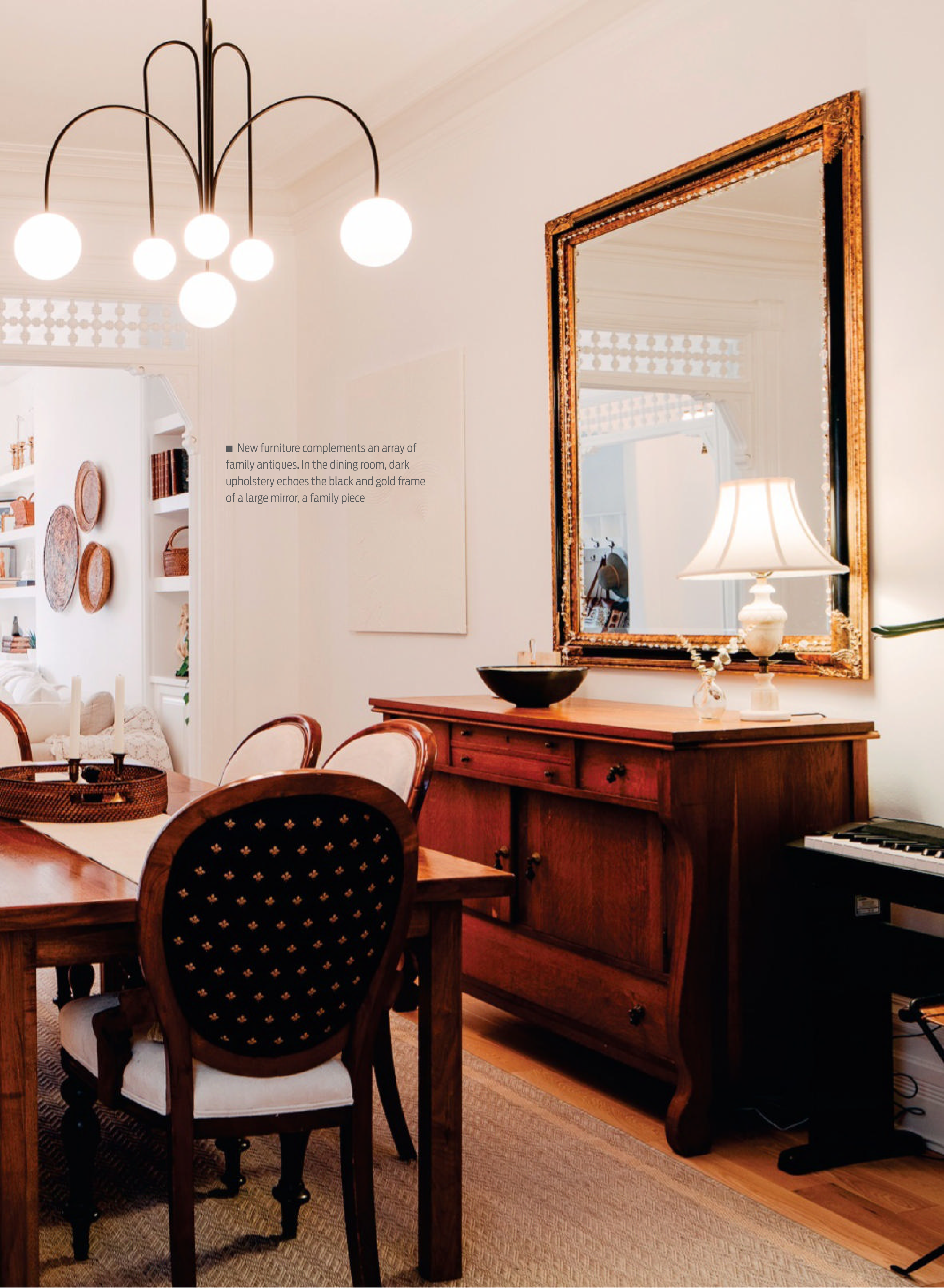
By Hattie Klotz

Photography by Gordon King

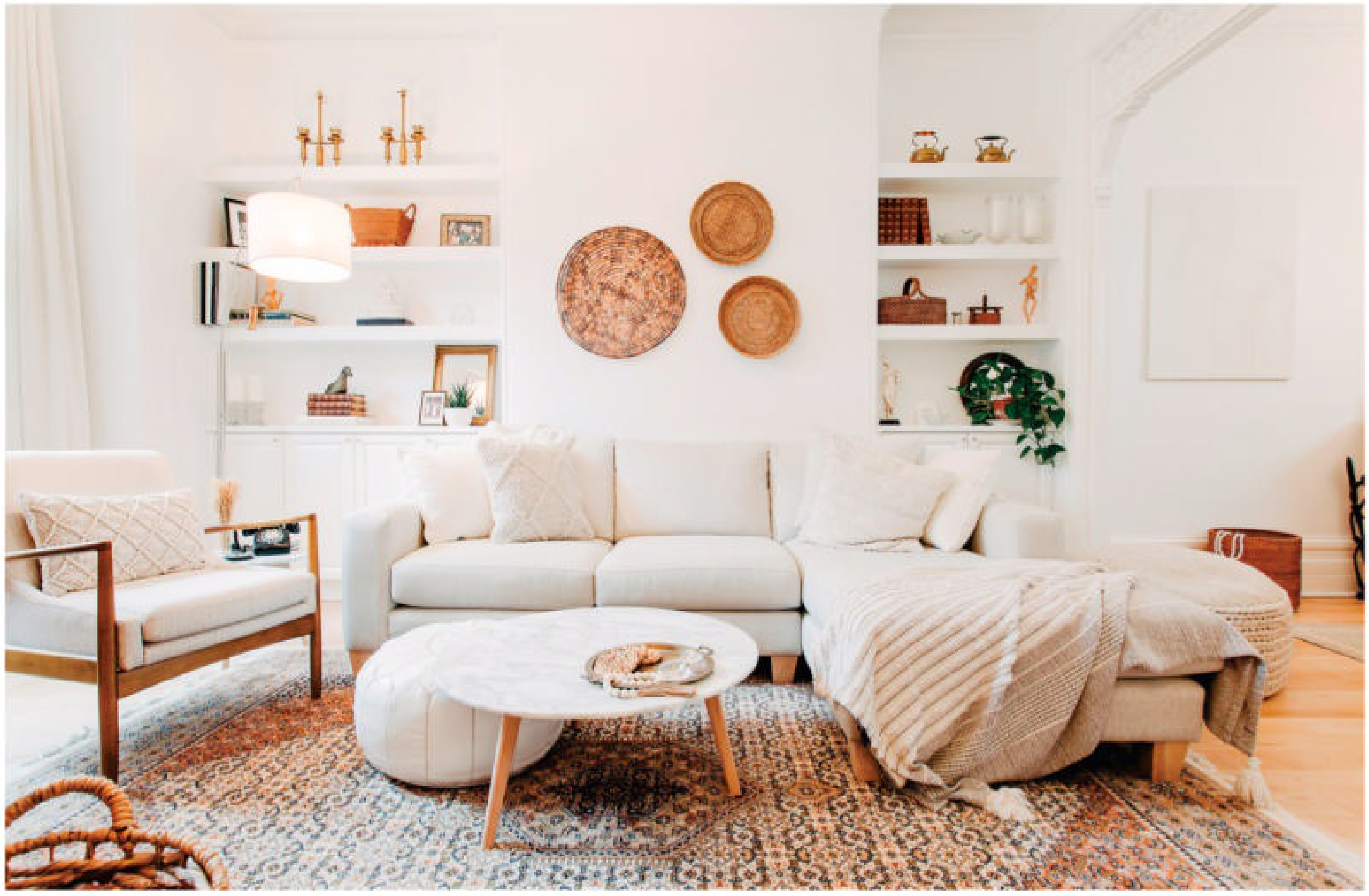
A heritage homecoming

When Pamela Bowles moved into her parents' Centretown home, she set off on a design journey that continues to unfold

BY JANET UREN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDAN BURDEN



■ New furniture complements an array of family antiques. In the dining room, dark upholstery echoes the black and gold frame of a large mirror, a family piece



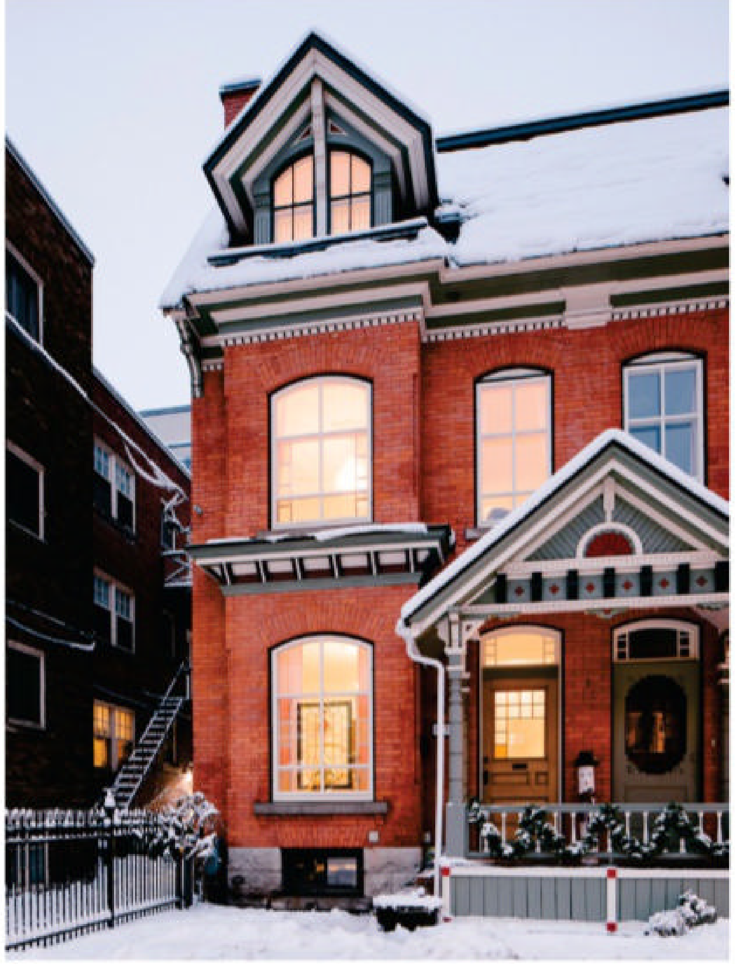
LEFT: "One of the hardest decisions was to close off the fireplace in the living room," says Pamela Bowles. "The room was just too small." Now, an arrangement of woven baskets hangs over what used to be the hearth

BELOW: Restoring the original doors and windows of the 100-year-old semi-detached house garnered Pamela an Award of Excellence at the recent Ottawa Heritage Awards

RIGHT: The kitchen, open to both the dining and family rooms on either end, forms the heart of the ground floor

Something magical happens when a new family moves into an old house. Walls move and disappear, old paint is sanded away and new aesthetics transform tired spaces. But as Pamela Bowles discovered while working to renew a grand old house on Cooper Street, the idea of family can remain the central inspiration.

Pamela brought her young children to live on Cooper Street some four years ago. Her parents bought it in 2007, and still lived there, but were spending more time at the cottage in Quebec and were planning their retirement. Pamela and the kids took over the top floor of the three-storey red brick house. It was meant to be a mere staging post in their lives, a temporary abode while they looked for somewhere else. What Pamela did not anticipate was the beginning of a design adventure that would change her life significantly.



She started off looking for a house downtown, but as the search proved disappointing and the prices astronomical, she talked to her parents about renovating and sharing the existing house on a long-term basis. Pamela's parents bought into her vision of turning old into new to serve three generations of the family. They entered into a real estate agreement that allowed Pamela to invest in the property and create a home for her children on the first two floors of the Cooper Street house, while a beautiful third-floor loft apartment remains as a *pied à terre* for the grandparents.

Pamela started planning and realized that this big red-brick house, a rare survivor on a downtown street, had good bones. The house was built around 1900 and was originally inhabited by Walter Armstrong, his wife Teresa, and their three adolescent sons.

When Walter and Teresa moved into the Cooper Street house it was a very different place. The rooms on the ground floor — living room, dining room, and kitchen, with a hallway and staircase alongside — were small, enclosed, and likely painted and wallpapered in dark colours and patterns.

The challenge was to open up the rooms on the ground floor, with their 12-foot ceilings, and to create a long, pale corridor of light from front to back, at the

same time retaining or replicating many of the original features, such as mouldings, baseboards, and windows. As for interior decoration, cool arrangements of white have brightened the rooms, while the textures of woven curtains and cushions, plaited baskets, stamped leather, and fibrous carpets in an array of neutral shades create a contemporary atmosphere.

Pamela has inherited her family's strong artistic sensibility. From the small oil painting that belonged to her paternal grandparents to a watercolour by her mother that is now in her daughter's room, the house is a rich gallery of storied artwork. Her grandfather was a lawyer who made furniture in his spare time; his lustrous, hand-made furniture can be spotted on the main floor. Original art that her grandmother collected in Paris hangs on the walls. In the bedroom of Pamela's daughter stands an antique bed that belonged to a great-grandmother. "My parents slept in that bed, and so did I at one time," says Pamela.

Instinctively understanding the need for an interplay of people and place in a family home, Pamela has imaginatively repurposed bits of old baseboard as frames for family portraits.

Not everything with the renovation has gone smoothly, and a project meant to absorb five months actually swelled to occupy three years. Work began just as the pandemic struck, and the whole family moved to the lake, where they were able to work remotely. In winter 2021, when the children started

■ **ABOVE:** A heritage plasterer restored the ceiling medallions in the living and dining rooms and replicated the plaster mouldings in other rooms. He had worked at Parliament Hill and used some of the same grand designs in this home

■ **RIGHT:** The opening up of the hall into the main rooms and the replacement of a heavy banister and ballisters with a lighter structure helped to bring a contemporary look to the front of the house

going back to in-person learning, the family returned to Centretown and settled into an apartment at Pamela's sister's house. "We slept on mattresses on the floor and we all cooked in the tiny kitchen. Fortunately, my family is really easy-going and supportive, so we got along."

Pamela finally moved into the Cooper Street house in August 2021, while everything was still wrapped in plastic. There, she lived alone for a while, continuing to sleep on a mattress on the floor. "It was work, work,

■ **RIGHT:** Toward the back of the house, a family room overlooks a patio and garden with a full-size table for family dinners in summer, all in the shadow apartment balconies. "It's very urban," says Pamela

■ **BELOW:** The dining table was made by Pamela's paternal grandfather about 20 years ago. New hardware for the buffet table makes this family heirloom functional and pretty

“It was work, work, work. I painted. I sanded. I panelled my bedroom. I got the upstairs ready for the children”

■ Pamela followed a blog post to create the pretty headboard. “I rented a nail gun and a mitre saw from Home Depot and went to work! It only took me a day” work. I painted. I sanded. I panelled my bedroom. I got the upstairs ready for the children."

Pamela has wrought mighty changes to the house on Cooper Street, and she has changed as well. She was enthralled by the whole design process and is now pursuing a diploma in interior decorating. She has also made important friends along the way as she explores what some call the "chaos industry."

Today, the house on Cooper Street graciously shelters three generations of Pamela's family. Though the design is cool and contemporary, there is something beautifully old-fashioned about what is, after all, a family story.

■ **RIGHT:** An exception to the pale orchestration of whites and creams is the tiny powder room at the back of the house. "This is my favourite room," says Pamela. It is papered in a dark floral paper reminiscent of the work of painter Henri Fantin-Latour

■ **BELOW:** In addition to the antique bed, this room features a side table made by Pamela's grandfather, and the art above the bed is by Pamela's mother. "The chandelier was just a must for the high ceilings of this princess room. The electrician carefully cut a hole in the rosette for the light fixture where there used to be a pipe for oil lamps"

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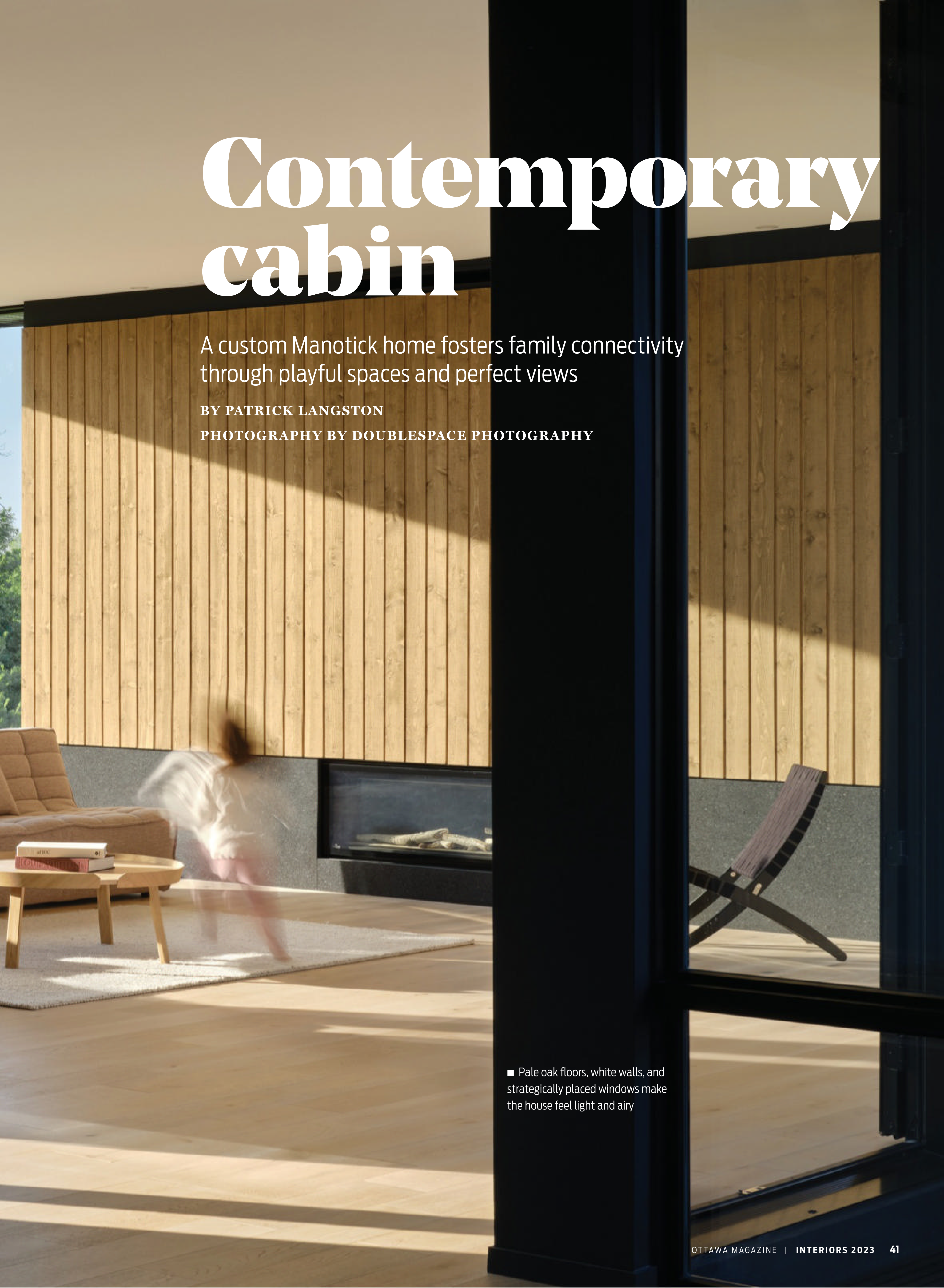

Contemporary cabin

A custom Manotick home fosters family connectivity through playful spaces and perfect views

BY PATRICK LANGSTON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DOUBLESPACE PHOTOGRAPHY

■ Pale oak floors, white walls, and strategically placed windows make the house feel light and airy

■ **LEFT:** An asymmetrical roof line, as well as the combination of wood cladding and brick with minimal detailing, help blend the structure with its surroundings

■ **BELOW:** Splashes of wood throughout the house bring warmth when they are struck by daylight

■ **OPPOSITE:** Sightlines were key in creating the floor plan; the couple wanted to be able to watch and interact with their children while working in the kitchen

Behind a half wall, a walkway leads around one side of this modern bungalow into a cozy lanai and a secluded courtyard. There, you spot not only the main entry but, on your right, floor-to-ceiling windows that reveal the spacious main living area. Thanks to extensive glazing, the view extends through the ground floor and to the backyard.

That walk to the main door is a delightful journey encapsulating what architect Mateusz Nowacki calls the home's "unexpected narrative." Nowacki designed the house in a new Manotick neighbourhood for his brother and sister-in-law, incorporating their fondness for Nordic minimalism and creating "playful moments" throughout.

"We gave Mateusz free rein," says his brother, Lukasz Nowacki, a project manager with the family business Nowacki Homes. Like his younger, Toronto-based brother, Lukasz is enthusiastic and voluble.

"We wanted the house to feel very light, very airy," says Lukasz's wife, Krystal Nowacki, a Montessori teacher. "So much thought was put into this house."

Light and airy it is, thanks in part to the home's mostly white interior, its pale oak floors, and those strategically placed windows that ensure privacy from the road and an abundance of daylight. The 3,750-square-foot dwelling, with its distinct living and sleeping areas, could also be described as simple, functional, and seamless. After nearly a year of living in the home with their young daughters, Kaia and Mischa, they also say that it supports the closeness they seek as a family.

When explaining their wishes for their new home, the couple told Mateusz, "build something that feels personal to us and embodies us," recalls the architect. "They had this property in mind and wanted something that fosters family connectivity and felt tight and organized."

Organization and family relationships are manifested everywhere, from the tidy, nearly invisible closets built into the hallway outside the bedrooms to the carefully planned sight lines in the main living area that allow Krystal to keep an eye on the children when she's working in the kitchen.

> “As the sunlight moves around the house you get this nice quality of light that bathes the house in a warm hue”

■ **LEFT:** The fireplace area is a favourite spot for Krystal. "I feel like I'm in a cabin"

■ **BELOW:** A black hood fan anchors the pale kitchen, which was designed around the couple's desire for clean, clutter-free spaces

Everything about the home also seems to embody its owners' personalities.

Outside, for example, the home feels comfortable with its surroundings, as does the Nowacki family. Asymmetrical steel roofs lend the home a physical modesty by making it appear lighter than one solid, dominating roofline would. The natural look of the wood cladding and brick together with minimal detailing help blend the structure with the surrounding neighbourhood.

The lanai, two courtyards, and a rear veranda further cement the connection with the large, pie-shaped lot.

Inside, the energy-efficient home is all about simple, linear forms that please the senses. It feels liberating compared to the fussy, self-conscious design of some houses. Window and door trim are almost non-existent, ceilings are high; each space has a clear purpose. "The house breathes," says Lukasz.

Open and bright, the kitchen is anchored by a black hood fan. Features like a coffee-making cupboard that minimizes noise and mess epitomize the owners' preferences.

"We like things clean," says Lukasz. "We don't like clutter," adds Krystal with a firm smile. The adjacent informal dining room has a dropped black ceiling, helping make the open space feel more intimate.

Textured wood panelling in the living room, like the other splashes of wood inside, echoes the home's exterior and reveals a special richness when daylight strikes it.

Daylight was a key consideration when designing the interior, just as it was when envisioning the exterior. The kitchen, for example, in keeping with the home's "unexpected narrative," responds vividly to the light that changes throughout the day. "As the sunlight moves around the house you get this nice quality of light that bathes the house in a warm hue," says Mateusz. "Light is free; you just have to know how to use it."

Elsewhere in the bungalow, the bedrooms are quiet and simple and the garage is a pristine home for Lukasz's prized high-performance hobby cars.

There are also favourite spaces. For Lukasz, it's a cozy spot by the front entrance where a chair and morning light make it ideal for greeting the day with a coffee.

For Krystal, it's the living room fireplace with its woody wall above. "I'm drawn to the fireplace. I feel like I'm in a cabin."

■ **ABOVE:** With its floor-to-ceiling windows and warm wood accents, the house seems to glow in the evening light

■ **LEFT:** Bathrooms are simple and sleek, continuing the Nordic minimalism elsewhere in the house

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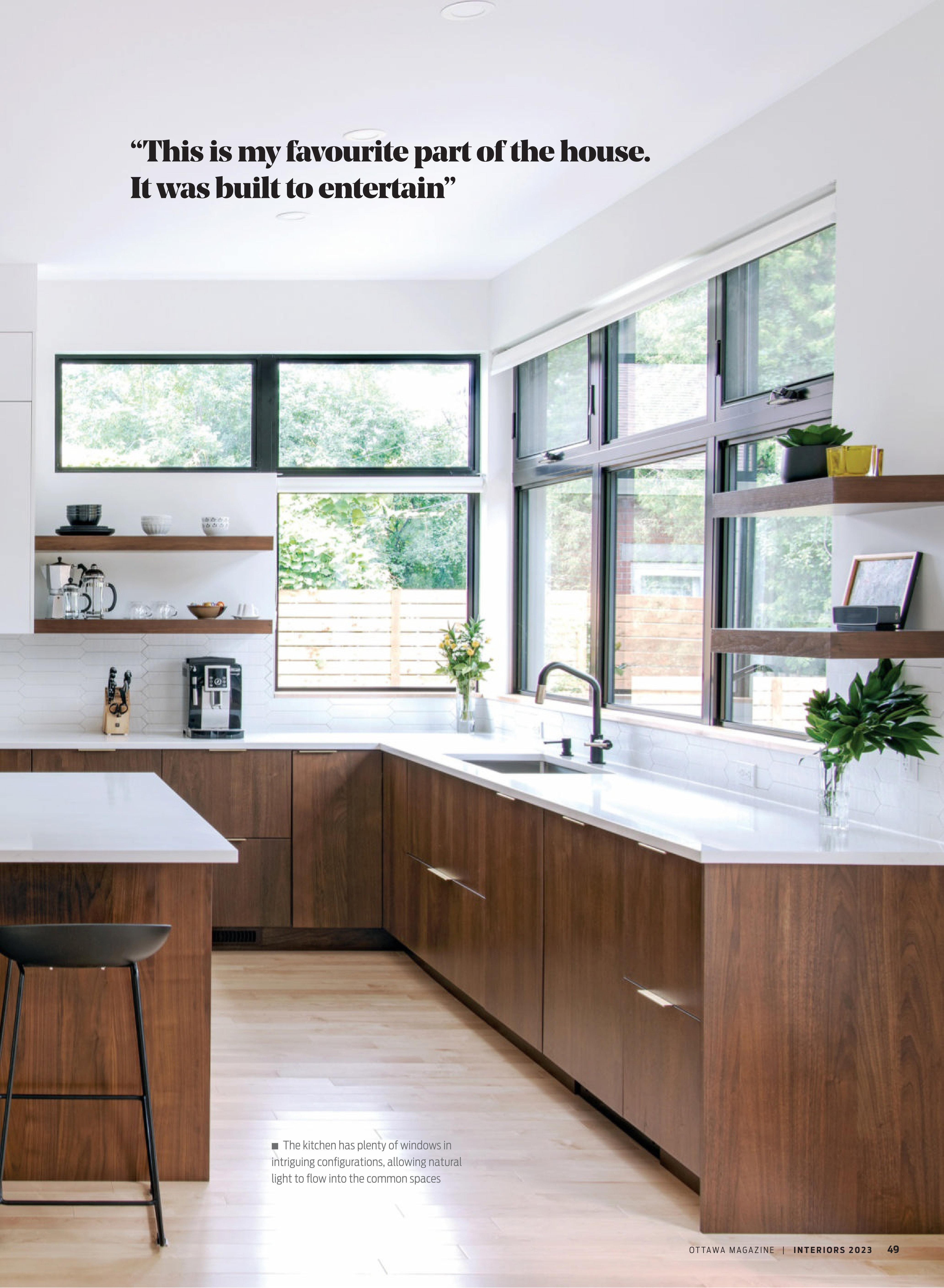
Simplified luxury

A new home in Carlingwood offers a northern take on the modern California aesthetic

BY HATTIE KLOTZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GORDON KING

“This is my favourite part of the house. It was built to entertain”



■ The kitchen has plenty of windows in intriguing configurations, allowing natural light to flow into the common spaces

Isabelle and Pietro Borracci purchased their Carlingwood West home in 2008, and for over 10 years it served them well as a rental investment. But they always dreamed of building on the property, which boasted a large lot, a slight hill, and a quiet streetscape. Anyone who has found themselves in that area south of Carling will know it lends itself to mid-century modern designs, and the Borraccis wanted to bring their own California-inspired take to the neighbourhood.

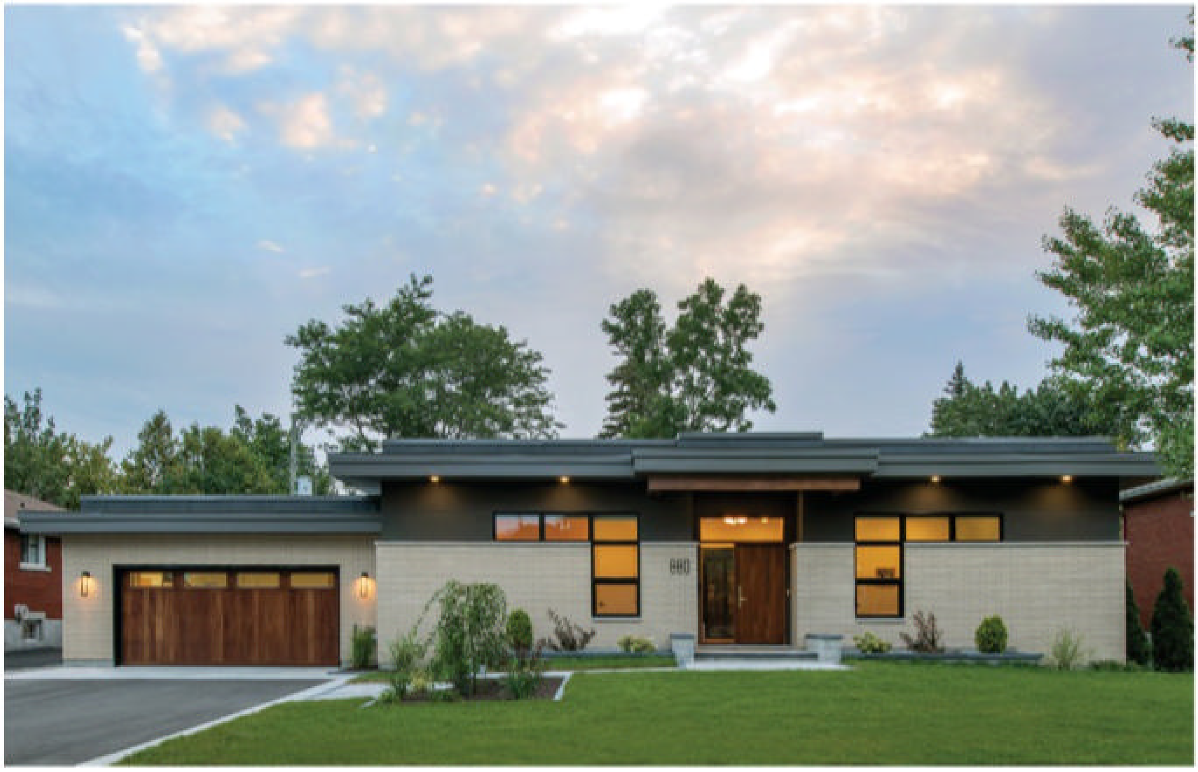
In 2019 the couple made the leap, informing their tenants of their decision to demolish the 1950s era bungalow and create something brand new on the property — indeed, something new for Ottawa, with an inner courtyard and a bold approach to everything from window placement to floorplans.

"It's always been a dream of ours to build a house there," says Isabelle. "There was just so much potential!"

While they are delighted with the result — a California-inspired, light-filled home — they could never have foreseen the wild ride it would be to get there. That's because when COVID sent the world into lockdown, it stopped the construction industry in its tracks. Though the Borraccis had applied for a permit in December 2019, it was not issued until May 2020, by which time the industry was already experiencing labour shortages. The price of materials was skyrocketing; key components were stuck in storage. Some of the trades honoured their pre-shutdown contracts, others met the couple halfway.

But they persevered, and the new single-storey place is a symphony in brick, wood, and steel, perched on a slight hill. It blends sympathetically with the surrounding homes, mostly 1950s low-lying, brick-fronted bungalows.

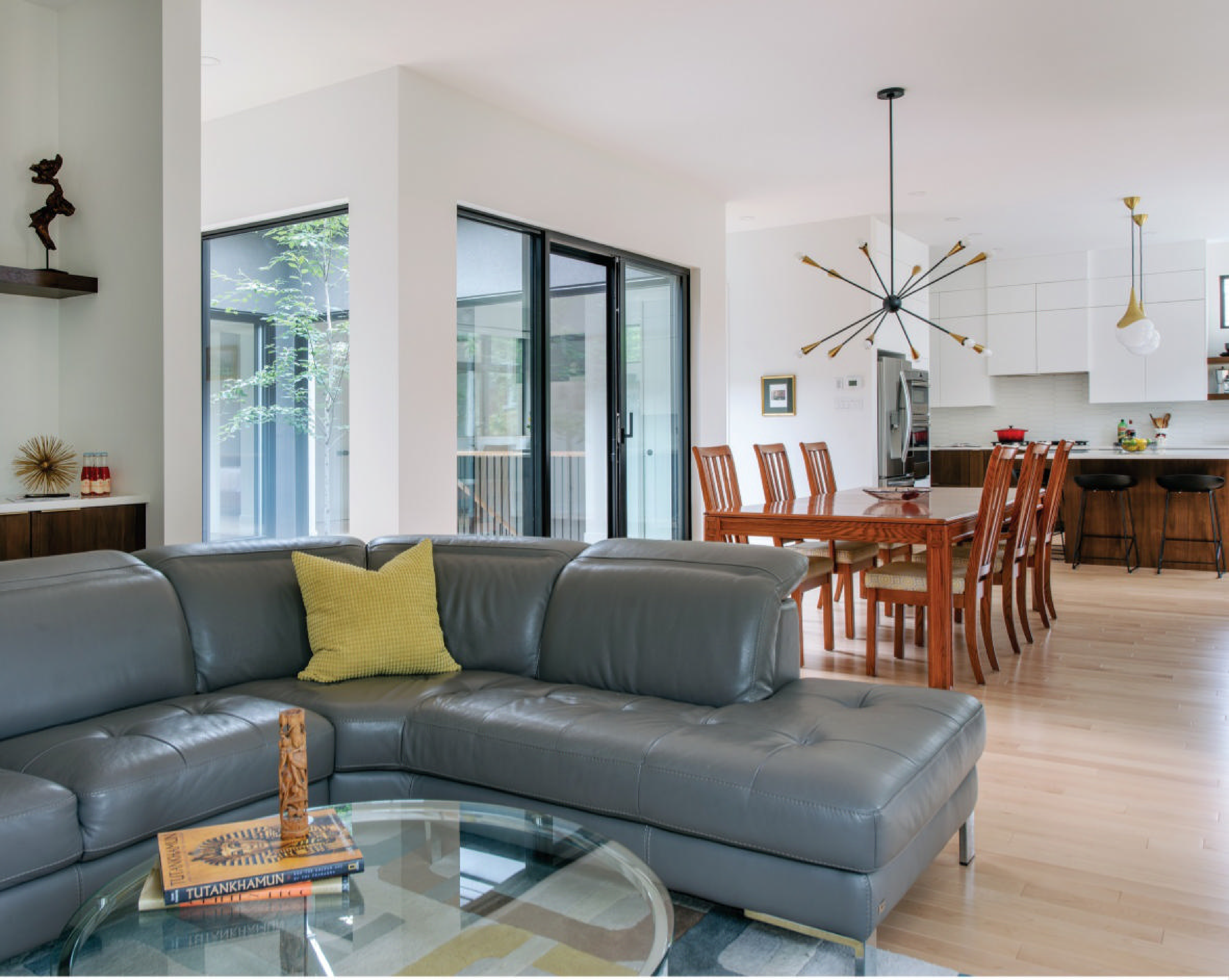
For inspiration, the homeowners looked at the designs of architect Rudolph A. Matern and real estate developer Joseph Leopold Eichler. The architect had lived in a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed home and developed distinctive residential subdivisions of mid-century modern style housing in the 1950s and early 1960s. Many consider Eichler to have changed the face of modern architecture in California and essentially created the California modern aesthetic. With these influences in mind, the Borraccis chose Ottawa architect Robert Martin of Robertson Martin Architects, who is well-versed in this style that focuses on

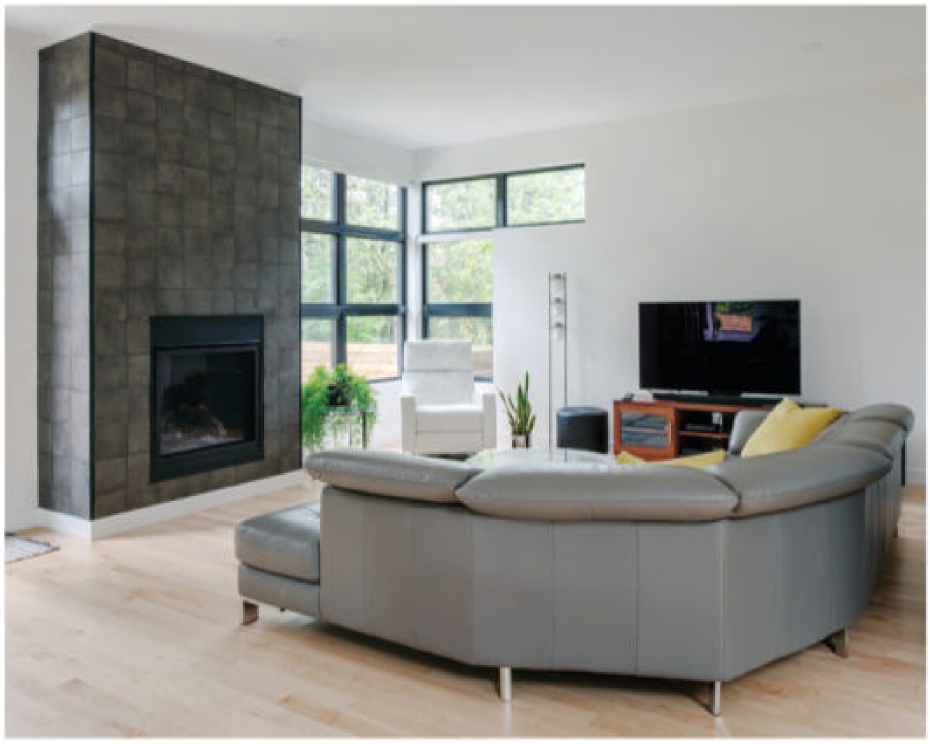


■ **ABOVE:** Large windows and minimalist furniture near the front door set a modern tone in the entryway

■ **LEFT:** The garage is constructed with insulated steel and clad in mahogany to match the front door

■ **RIGHT:** One of the guiding principles of Eichler designs is to "bring the outside in," particularly through sky wells placed in the centre of the home





■ **ABOVE:** The living room, dining room, and kitchen all flow as one across the back of the home. The area is well lit from both the central courtyard and the numerous windows facing the backyard

■ **LEFT:** The gas fireplace is clad in grey tile and anchors the room without drawing too much attention away from the view outside

horizontal forms and symmetry. Martin immediately incorporated the key Eichler design features such as a central courtyard or sky-well, and a low-slung roof.

Isabelle Borracci was also deeply involved in the design. She's a graphic designer and her father, François LeBlanc, is an architect who worked in conservation for UNESCO in Paris and for the Getty Institute in California. "Proportions are very important to me," she says, explaining that designs were based on the Golden Ratio, a mathematical rule, also known as the Divine Proportion, that exists in nature and makes elements look balanced. In this new home, it was applied to the placement of windows in the house to create a sense of rhythm.

Boasting 10-foot ceilings on the main floor, the 2,500-square-foot house is flooded with light, even on the dullest day. This is thanks to the central courtyard that glows like a lantern in the heart of the house. Within the courtyard is a slim and airy serviceberry tree, which is surrounded by dark grey tile and stones. At least one bee has found its way into the courtyard to pollinate the serviceberry flowers. The family hopes to see red berries on the tree this fall. Sliding doors allow the homeowners and their guests to walk directly through the centre of the house, rather than around either side. This impressive element establishes a strong relationship between inside and outside, which is notably one of the most important design themes in Eicher Homes — to bring the outside in.

While anyone visiting the house will appreciate the many large windows, this detail actually required extra care because it surpasses the amount of glass allowed under City of Ottawa building codes. As a result, the couple had to put in commercial-grade, triple-glazed panels throughout to mitigate heat loss. This construction detail, along with the many inches of rigid foam insulation, has produced a house with a tightly sealed envelope. Heating costs are less than their previous home, which was much smaller.

The bedrooms are located on either side of the magnificent oversized mahogany front door, facing the

PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID KAWAI

■ **LEFT:** François LeBlanc, Pietro Borracci, and Isabelle Borracci share a laugh in the kitchen of their new Carlingwood home

■ This dining set, brought from their previous home, fit perfectly in the new space and adds warmth

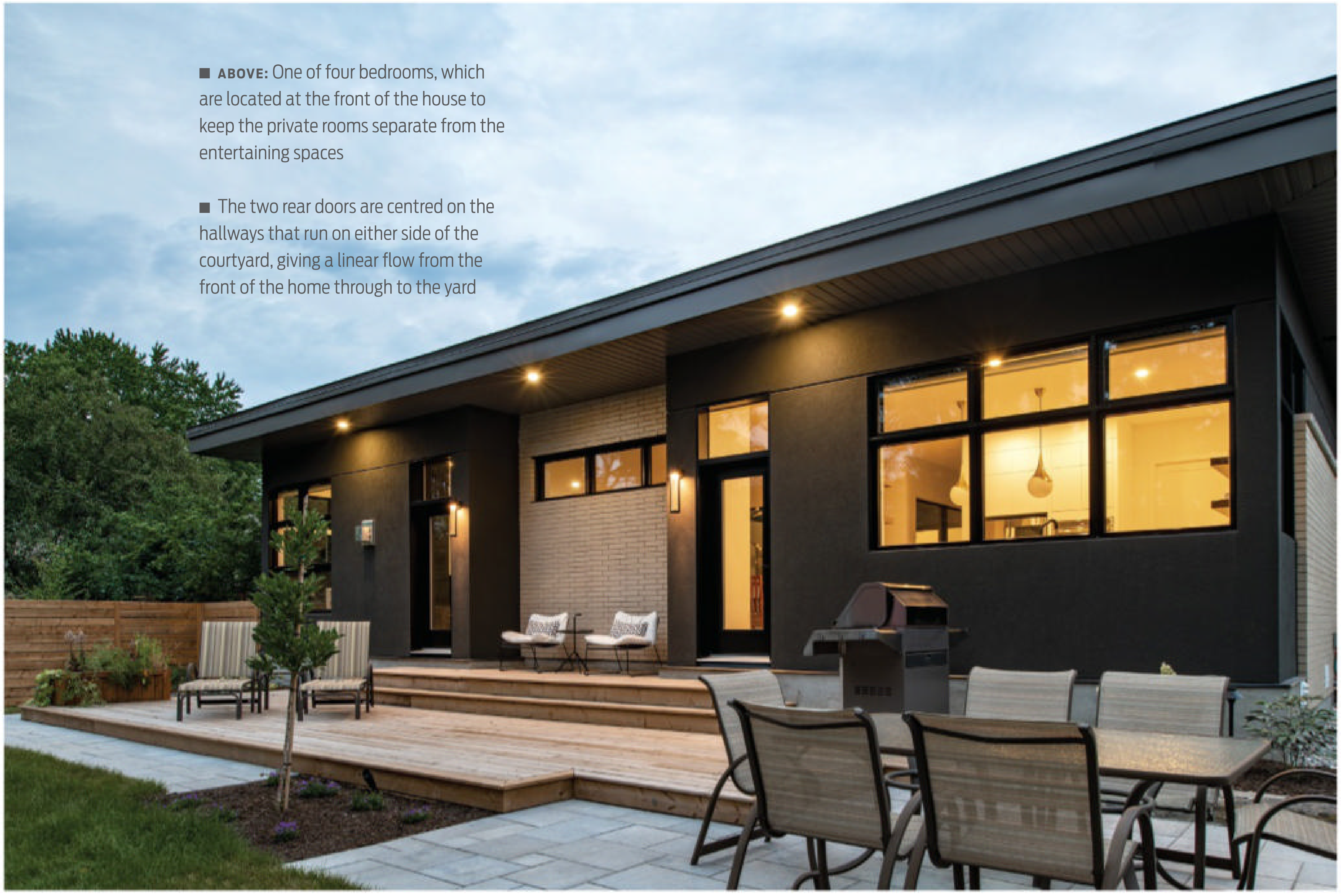
quiet street. By placing the bedrooms and other private spaces at the front of the house, Martin was able to cluster the shared living spaces together, near the back of the house.

The kitchen, dining area, and sitting room stretch across the full 100-foot rear. Light floods in from every corner. Two doors lead to the garden. The large kitchen and dining table are bathed in natural light. “This is my favourite part of the house,” says Isabelle. “It was built to entertain.”

The finishes are consistent throughout the house: walnut and brushed gold hardware on the Deslauriers kitchen cabinets, light fixtures, shelving and the front door. For other interior doors, Isabelle chose black iron. Maple hardwood floors throughout exude a sense of simplified luxury.

Reflecting on the process, the Borraccis are thrilled with the results. “I personally feel very lucky to have been able to realize my own dream to work on this sort of project with my father, who is not getting younger and who was able to provide us with invaluable advice throughout,” says Isabelle.

While all these details combine to create a house that vibrates in harmony, for Pietro it’s the courtyard that sings. “Especially at night, when I can look up to see the moon, and in the winter, when it’s like a snow globe.”



■ **ABOVE:** One of four bedrooms, which are located at the front of the house to keep the private rooms separate from the entertaining spaces

■ The two rear doors are centred on the hallways that run on either side of the courtyard, giving a linear flow from the front of the home through to the yard

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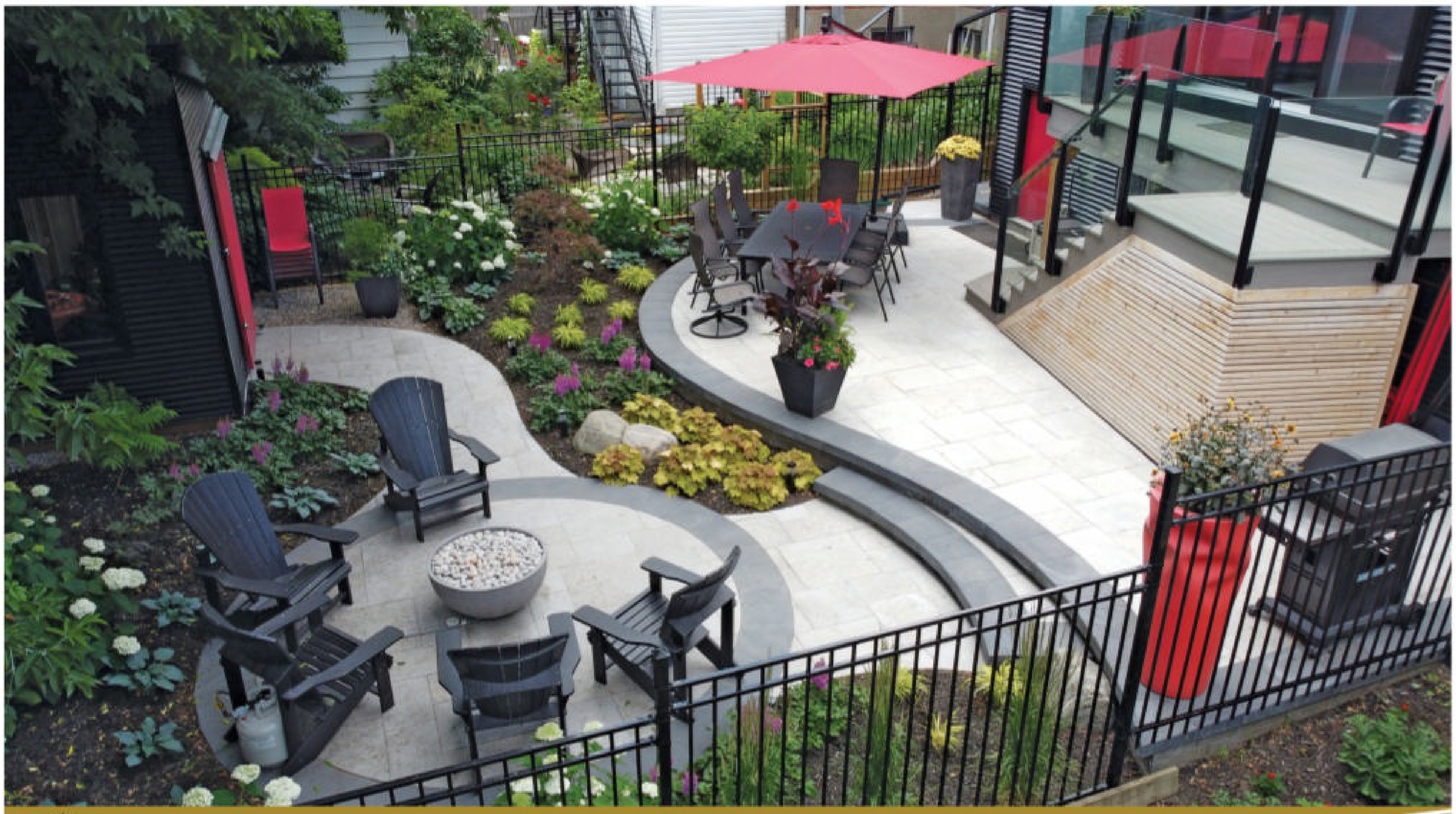

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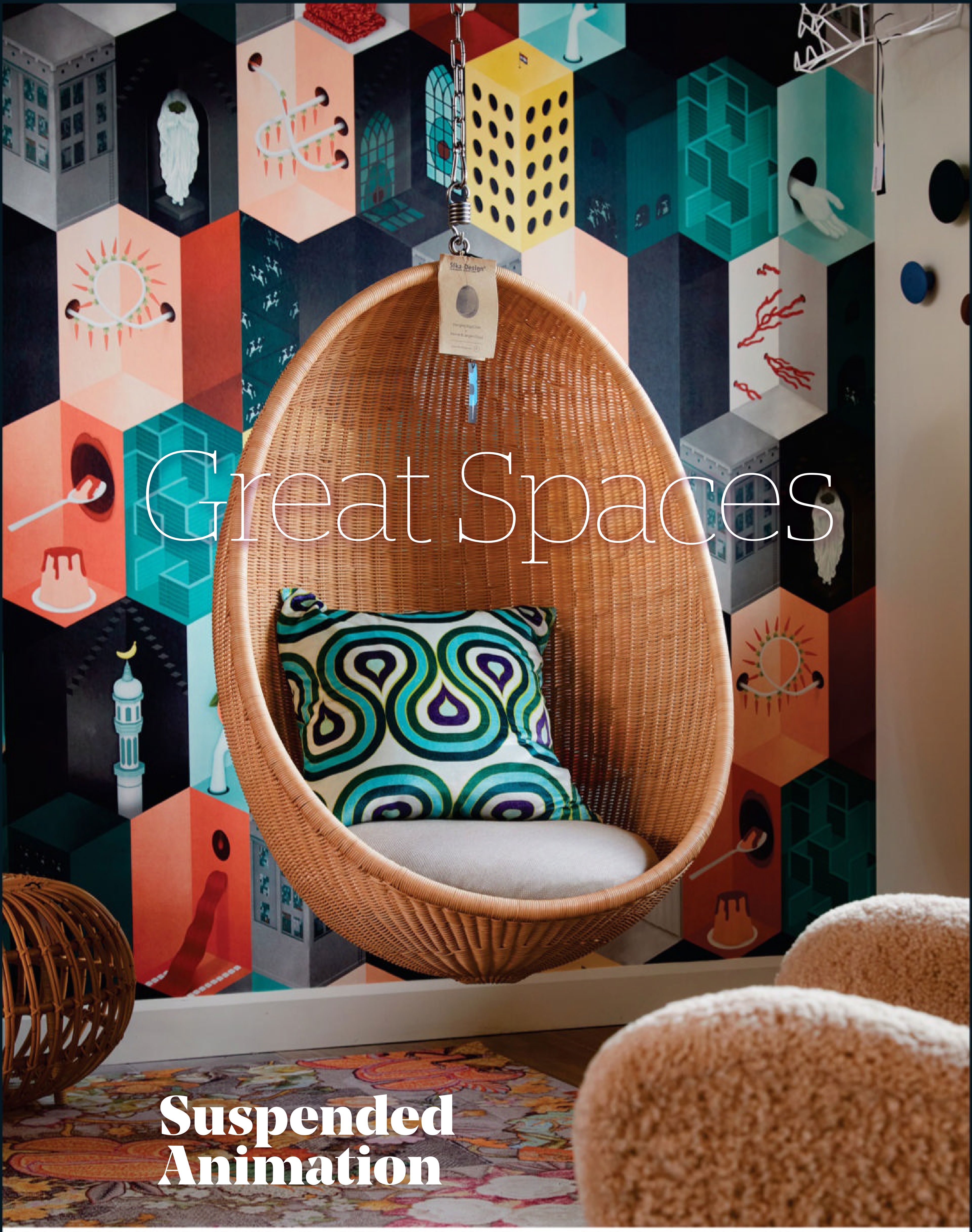


Suspended Animation

The move last year to a 5,000-square-foot shop on Catherine Street — up from 900 square feet at the old ByWard Market site — has allowed the Modern Shop owner Michael Shaikin so much more space to showcase all manner of modernist wonders, including the absolutely stunning hanging egg chair from Nanna Ditzel. Made of rattan, it can be hung directly from the ceiling or with the stand, also available at Modern Shop. This unique piece would suit a spacious living room or an outdoor area such as a pool deck or porch. *themodernshop.com.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY RÉMI THÉRIAULT - HOUSE OF COMMON STUDIO

Modern wonder

Two 19th century townhomes are renovated to create one fantastic ByWard Market abode

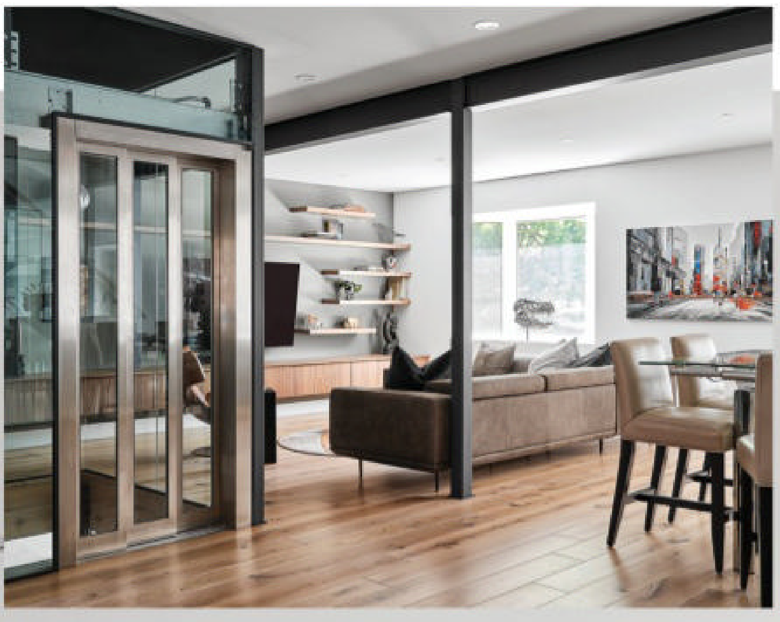
BY HATTIE KLOTZ
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JUSTIN VAN LEEUWEN

Hidden behind the double front doors of an 1880s ByWard Market red-brick townhouse is a modern gem. With plenty of natural light, generous proportions, an open floor plan, and voluminous space, this period house is more contemporary than conservative, more palazzo than pied-a-terre.

Brian and Alejandra Doxtotor bought the first half of this building in 2008. It was typical of comparable period homes blessed with high ceilings and good bones, and while they loved it, it was also narrow and rather dark. Soon after they moved in, the couple mentioned to their neighbour that if he ever wanted to sell, they would be interested. Some nine years later, he was ready to move, and the Doxtotors began to think big.

The couple knew they wanted to do a major renovation, which ultimately took two years from start to completion. They worked with Conrado Canolo from Simmonds Architecture, “a real gentleman,

The home’s classic townhouse exterior belies the modern and airy interior, elegantly disguising a wondrous living space



■ **INSET:** The elevator and its workings are under glass to show off what would typically be a hidden piece of infrastructure, ultimately making it a central feature of the home

ABOVE: The walnut cabinets by Cedar Ridge Designs add a rich contrast to the spacious and bright kitchen

RIGHT: New hardwood by Log's End replaced the original, uneven flooring

with a great eye for detail," says Brian. While they clarified their vision for the project, they ran an Airbnb from the second property for about 15 months. However, when they were ready to begin the renovation in early 2020, they discovered they weren't quite prepared for the scope of the work. On the ground floor alone, they uncovered multiple layers of flooring — none of it level. So they tore it all out, as they did with much of the remainder of both houses, to create a seamless double-wide home that features a glass-and-steel elevator as a focal point. Both Brian and Alejandra are engineers. Rather than hiding the elevator in a dark corner, they wanted to see the mechanics of it, so it rises through the centre of the house, right up to the rooftop terrace. The stairs also make a statement: made from a single central steel girder, they snake up one side of the house, featuring chunky wood treads and glass instead of a handrail. It adds up to the illusion of a floating staircase.

On the ground floor, a glass-walled wine storage cabinet houses 200 bottles. The custom creation also serves as an airy, screen-like barrier between the entryway and a seating area. An open-plan kitchen, living, and dining room area make the most of light from both sides of the building. Windows offer views with gritty charm: fire escapes and a patchwork of rooftops and brick walls to

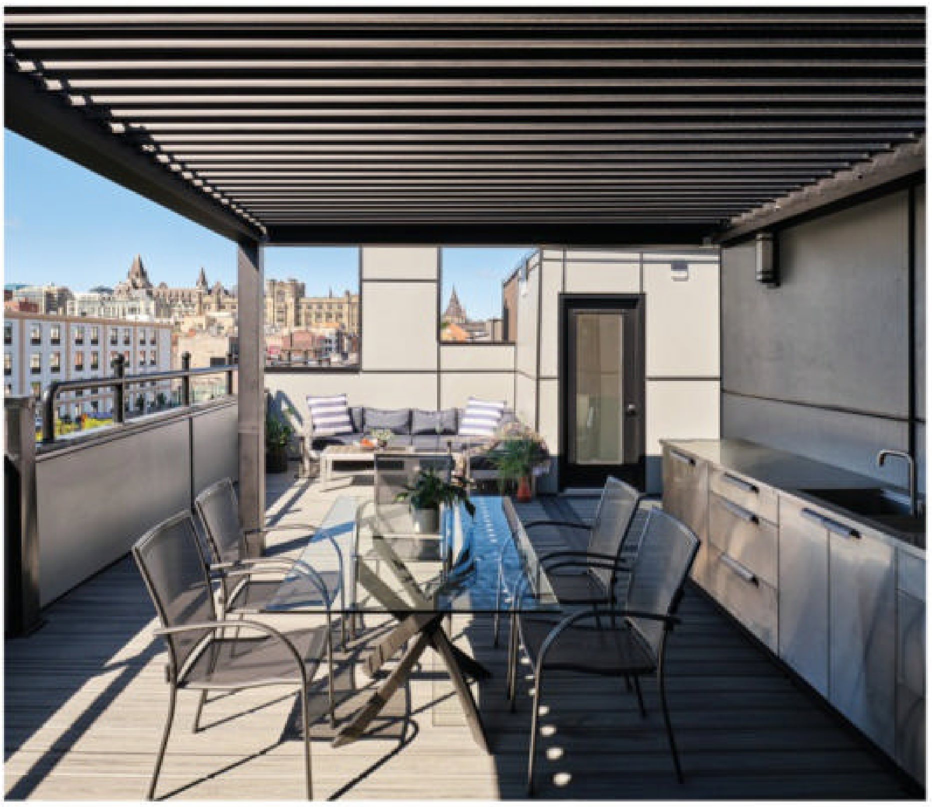
■ **RIGHT:** The motorized awning opens like Venetian blinds to let the sun shine in, or closes to keep the rain out of this well-appointed patio

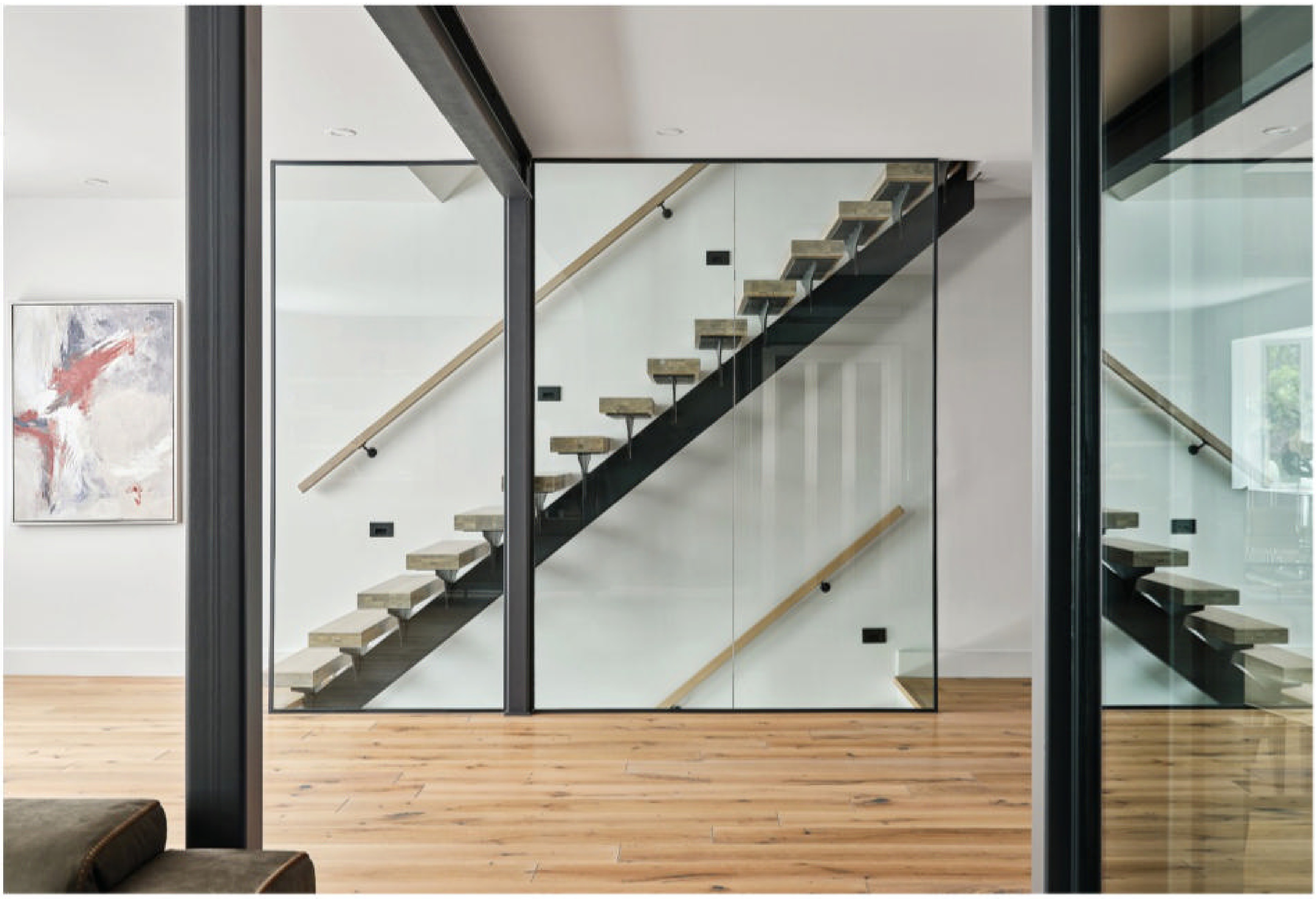
■ **BELOW:** Rather than hide the bones of the home, the Doxtotors put them on full display, allowing even a stairwell to become a showpiece

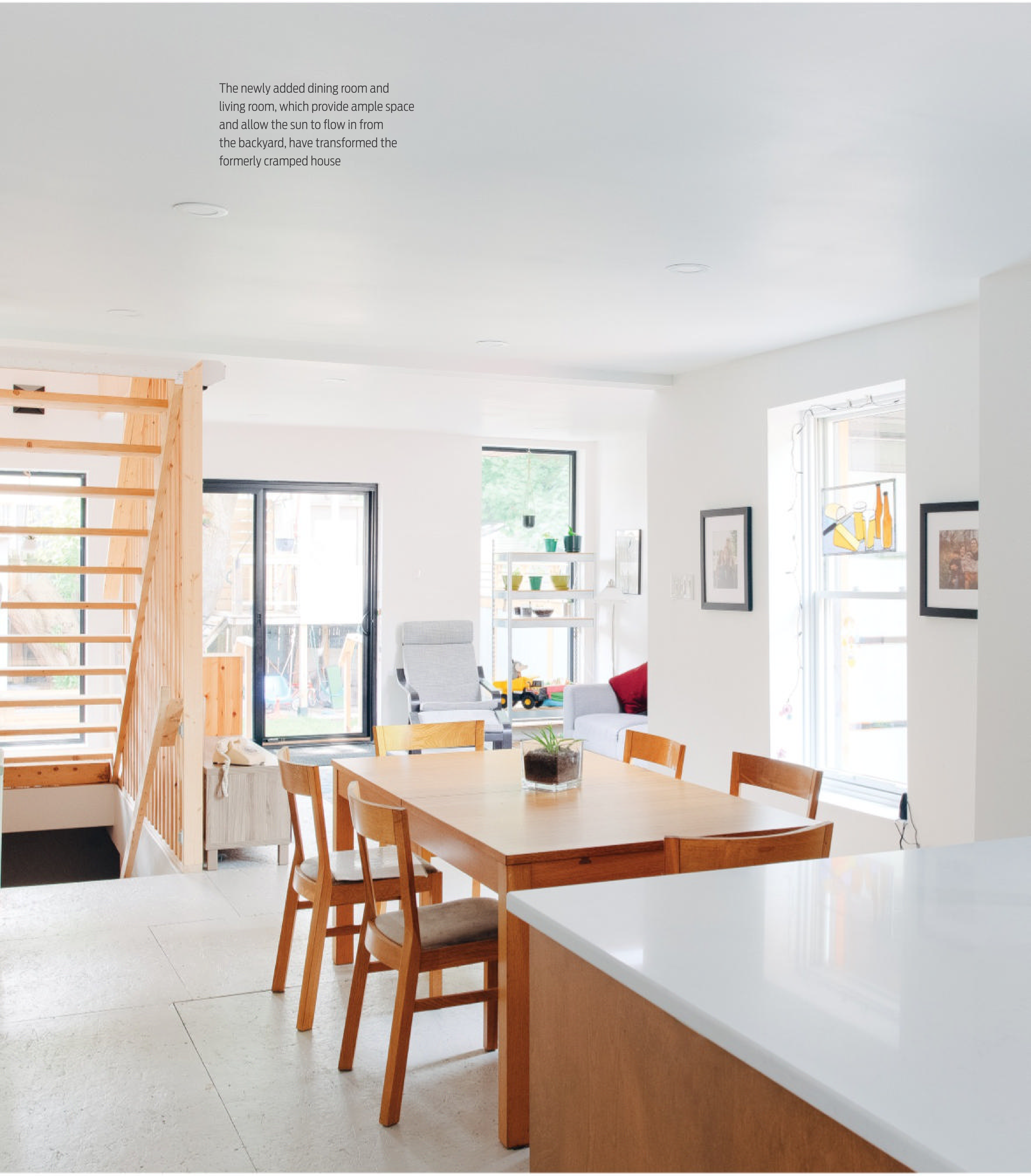
one side, trees and sidewalks to the other. Walnut cabinetry throughout brings rich tones to built-in cabinets in the living room, floating downlit shelves, and kitchen storage.

For keen cooks, this kitchen is a dream, boasting a six-burner gas top and double oven, a wall-mounted convection oven, and lots of prep space. “Alejandra is amazing in the kitchen,” says Brian. “She uses the space and the tools to make wonderful creations for the family on a nightly basis, with fresh produce, seafood, and meat procured from the ByWard Market merchants. Her specialty is osso bucco with fresh homemade pappardelle pasta.”

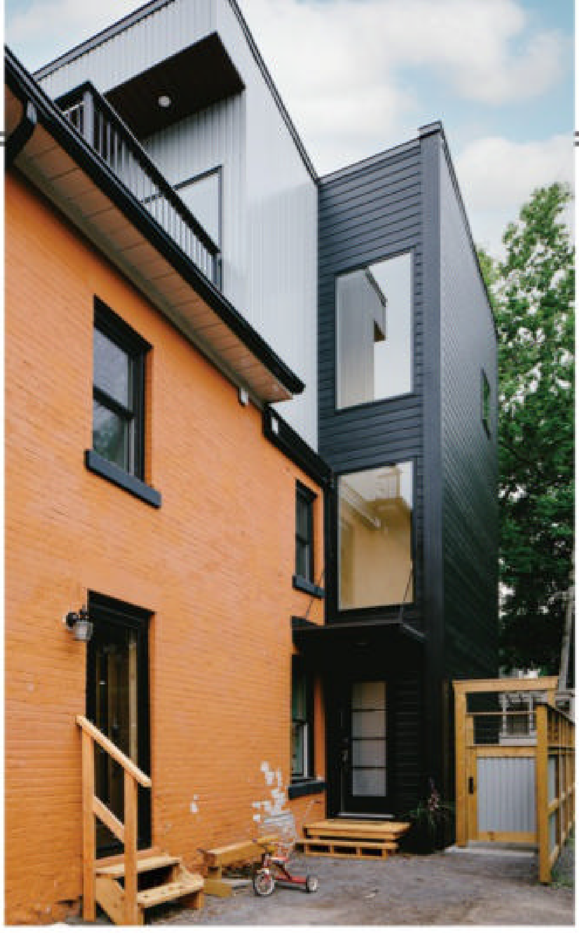
The rooftop terrace is Brian’s favourite spot to hang out. It features a full outdoor kitchen, hot tub, seating area, and dining table with a motorized awning. With its views to the Library of Parliament, the Peace Tower, and Chateau Laurier, it offers a beautiful perspective on the city.







The newly added dining room and living room, which provide ample space and allow the sun to flow in from the backyard, have transformed the formerly cramped house



GREAT SPACE

New Heights

This Hintonburg house is over 100 years old, but its ingenious design is completely modern

BY BARBARA SIBBALD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRENDAN BURDEN

The narrow roads of Hintonburg are lined with good intentions gone amiss. It's easy to say you'll renovate an old house, but when serious problems jack up costs and timelines, the answer is often to tear town and build anew. But Jonathan Belanger and Sara Parenteau-Comfort made a bold move: they kept their little house and built up, placing two large additions onto the original dwelling.

For over a year they searched for a house to renovate in Hintonburg. They already lived in, and loved, the neighbourhood, but their family was growing. After six failed offers, they bought a 980-square-foot house on Merton Street, between Wellington West and Scott streets. Built in the late 1800s, it was a true fixer-upper with a warren of small rooms, as well as sloping floors and windowsills, but they figured they could handle it: Jonathan had worked in construction and Sara, an occupational therapist, had helped renovate their triplex.

■ AT RIGHT: The kitchen is the most completely finished room in the house, with aesthetically pleasing built-in cabinets and island by El-Bast Custom Woodwork Inc.

■ BELOW LEFT: The architect and owners reduced costs by using unfinished wood for the stair treads and two-by-fours for the balusters, reminiscent of the original lath and plaster walls

■ BELOW RIGHT: Each of the house's three stairwells has a different view. This one frames the mature maple tree in the backyard. "It allows our kids to play in a safe greenspace, no matter the season"

"We were looking for a distressed house," says Jonathan, "but we underestimated how distressed this place was."

Days after taking possession in October 2019, they removed drywall in the basement to a daunting sight: crumbling foundation.

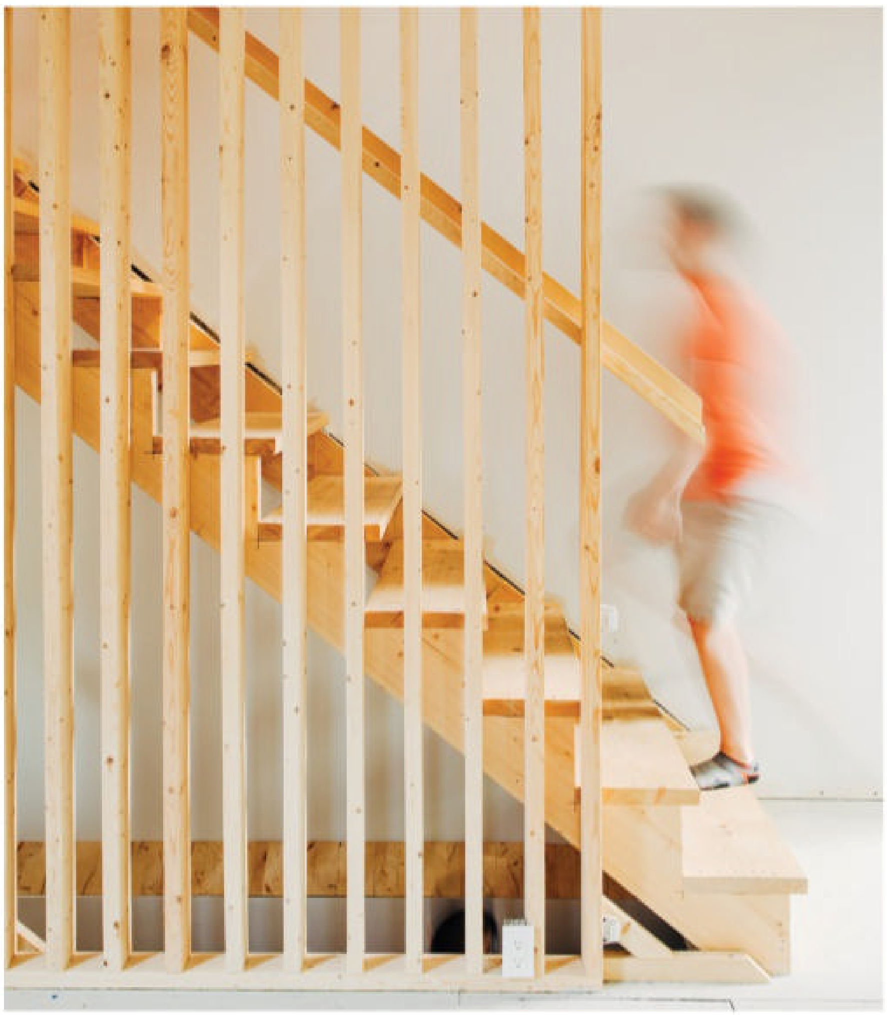
"You could see the sand pouring out of it," says Jonathan.

Stones had fallen out, too. It seemed the previous owner had excavated the basement to make the space higher but had neglected to bolster the foundation. One structural engineer refused to sign off on any solution. The couple considered demolishing, but they desperately wanted to keep the original house. They already had the design by Jay Lim of 25:8 Architecture. Lim had told them its brick cladding was relatively rare — plus, tearing it down would have meant losing the current set-back, which is about three feet or so from the sidewalk. On a small 25- by 84-foot lot this was a big deal.

Fortunately, Maurice Quinn at Capacity Engineering, who worked on the Centre Block restoration on Parliament Hill, "saved the day," says Jonathan. His solution involved two mixers of cement to shore up the basement walls with a sort of bench. "It was stressful but quick to fix."

Then came the challenge of squeezing their must-haves into the 12-foot-wide house. "We were planning down to the millimetre," says Lim, who created a compact, efficient home with plenty of play spaces inside and out. A spacious backyard was a priority, so instead of adding to the back of the house, Lim went up three storeys, which brought 858 square feet to the interior.

Keeping costs low was also essential, so Jonathan took the role of general contractor, which saved about $100,000. In addition, many of the interior finishes are construction-grade materials, includ-



ing two-by-fours for handrails and railings, as well as unfinished drywall. For the subfloor, they went with OSB subfloor instead of hardwood. Jonathan also built custom pieces, such as the entrance closet with cubicles and planter boxes.

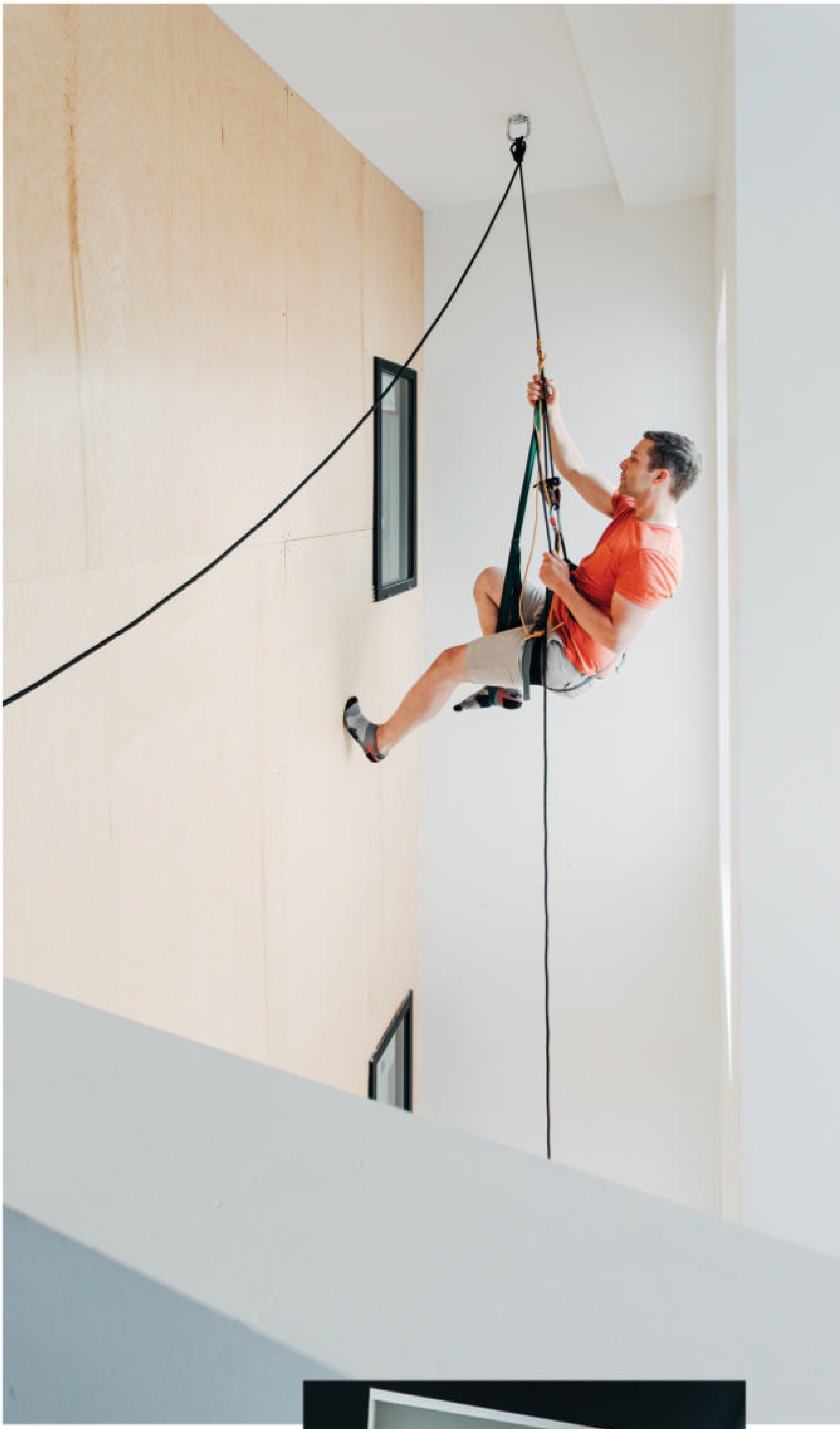
There are two separate additions to the back of the original house. The middle addition, attached to the original house, includes a spacious dining room on the main level. The second storey has a central laundry and clothes storage, and stairs to the third level, which features five-year-old Julien's bedroom and an office for Jonathan, who works for the federal government. From his desk, a window perfectly frames nearby St. Francis D'Assisi Church. Nearby, a large balcony offers a space for the family to grow vegetables.

The three-storey addition facing the back of the house has a large living room on the main floor, while upstairs the master bedroom sits within a two-storey cube with a cantilevered balcony overlooking the backyard.

The two walls outside the bedroom cube, which are three storeys tall, begged for special treatment. They considered a green wall but settled on something far more unusual: climbing walls. Jonathan, an aspiring climber, clad them in sanded maple plywood. Engineered beams and belay anchors were also installed; the rest is still underway.

"I like to have playful aspects," says architect Jay Lim. "Something joyful."

The addition is wrapped in grey and black metal. Walking south up Merton, the house seems in keeping with neighbouring homes, but then you see the

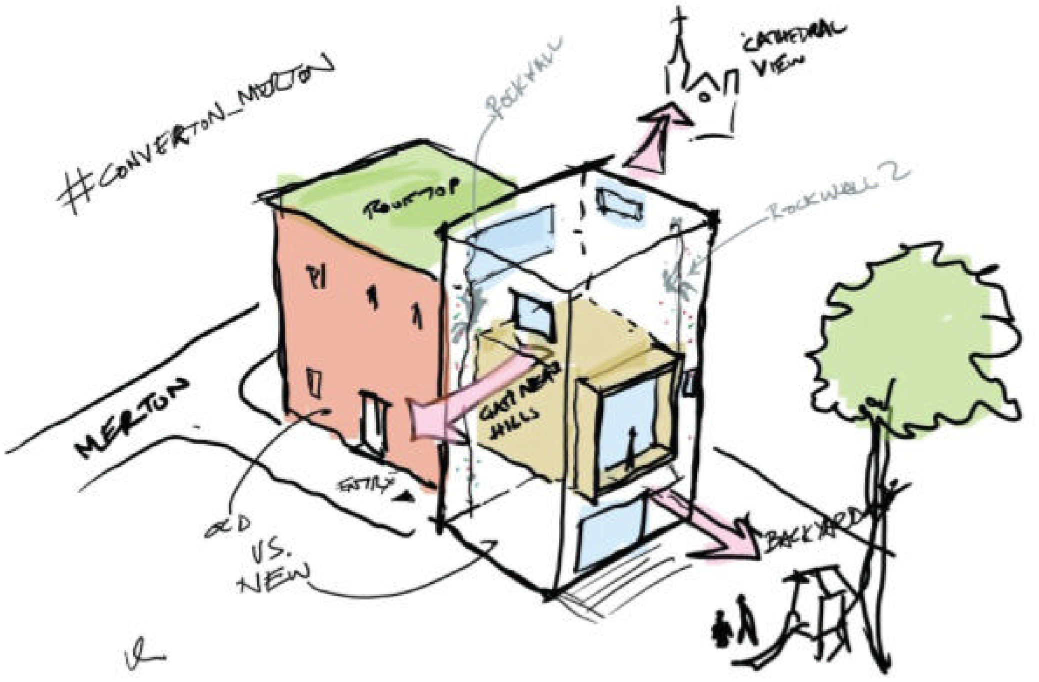


■ **ABOVE AND RIGHT:** Being housebound during COVID had some people metaphorically climbing the walls. Jonathan took it to a new level. The three-storey addition has two bare walls that are perfect for a climb and having a whole lot of fun black-and-silver metal addition. “There’s that element of surprise,” says Lim.

The overall effect of the multi-layered home with three staircases, balconies, and interior three-storey walls is like an Escher drawing: artistic, fun, and unique. Yet it’s also very much an authentic family home: comfortable, practical, and warm. Perhaps it’s that combination that made it a finalist for best renovation in the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association contest.

The family moved in August 2020, just in the nick of time: their second son, Vincent, was born in September.

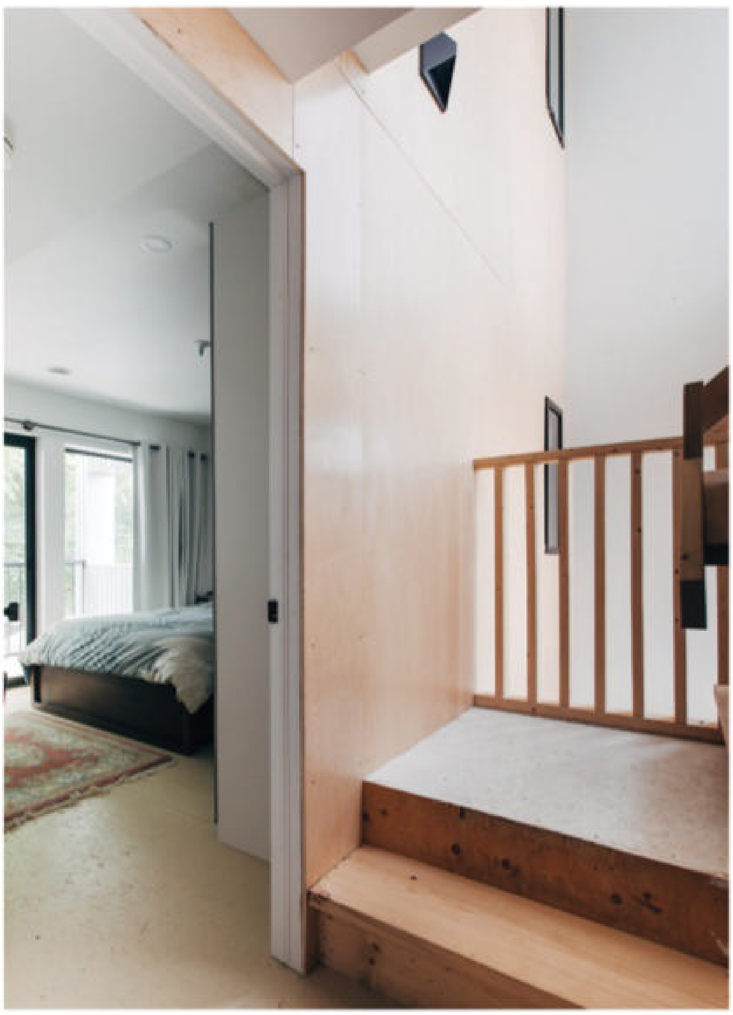
It’s still a work-in-progress — “it’s hard to find time with the kids,” says Jonathan — but the hiatus has given them a chance to develop plans that meet their evolving needs, leaving “potential for further improvement still to come,” says Sara.



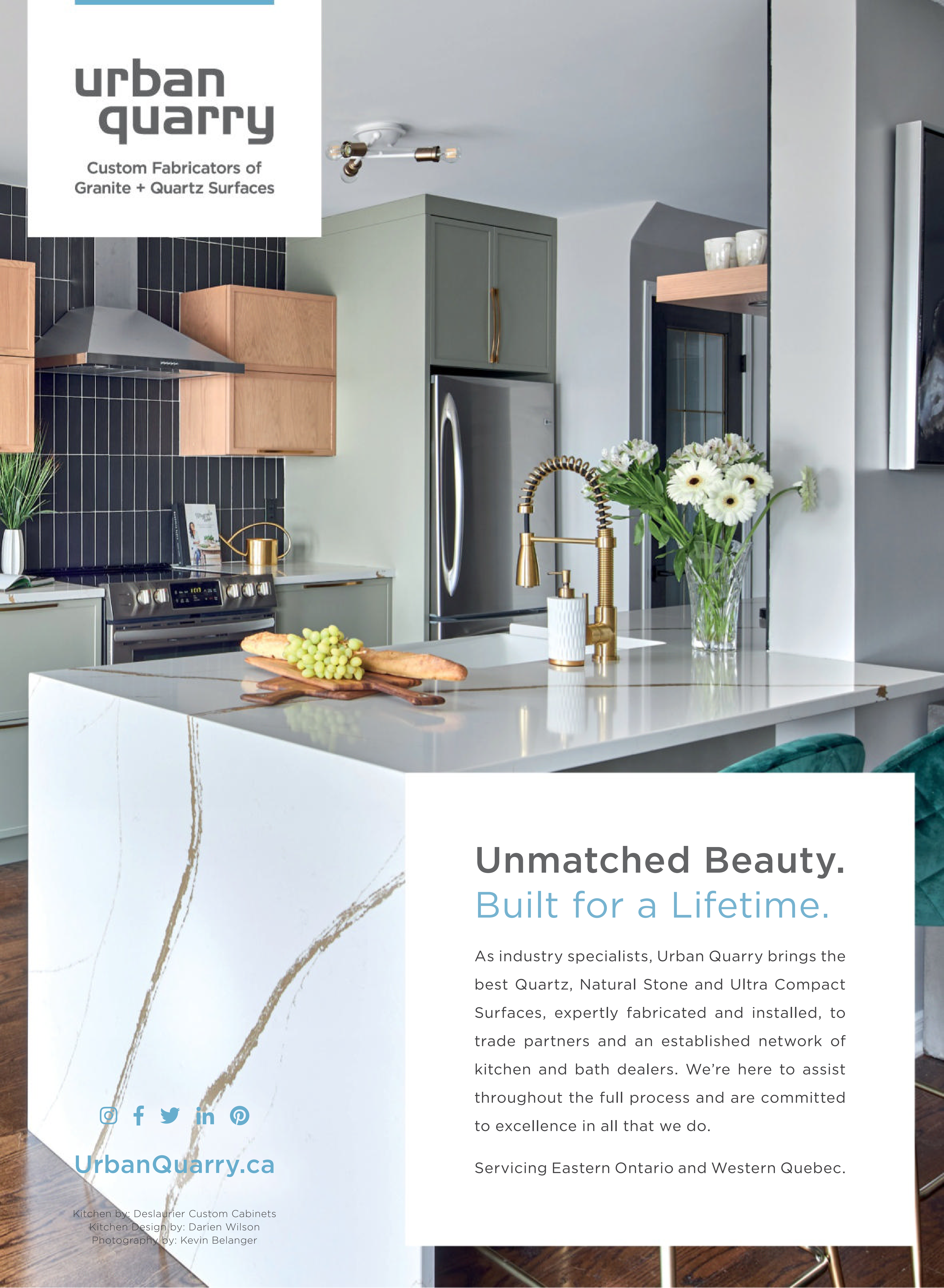
■ **TOP:** Jay Lim’s initial sketch illustrates how the two interior cubes work together to provide a new bedroom (centre cube) and living space below. The windows were placed to frame specific views

■ **AT LEFT:** The private balcony off the master bedroom overlooks the backyard

■ **BELOW:** The final step of an interior staircase forms a modified balcony that allows access to the east-facing climbing wall



RENDERING BY JAY S. LIM, 25:8 ARCHITECTURE + URBAN DESIGN



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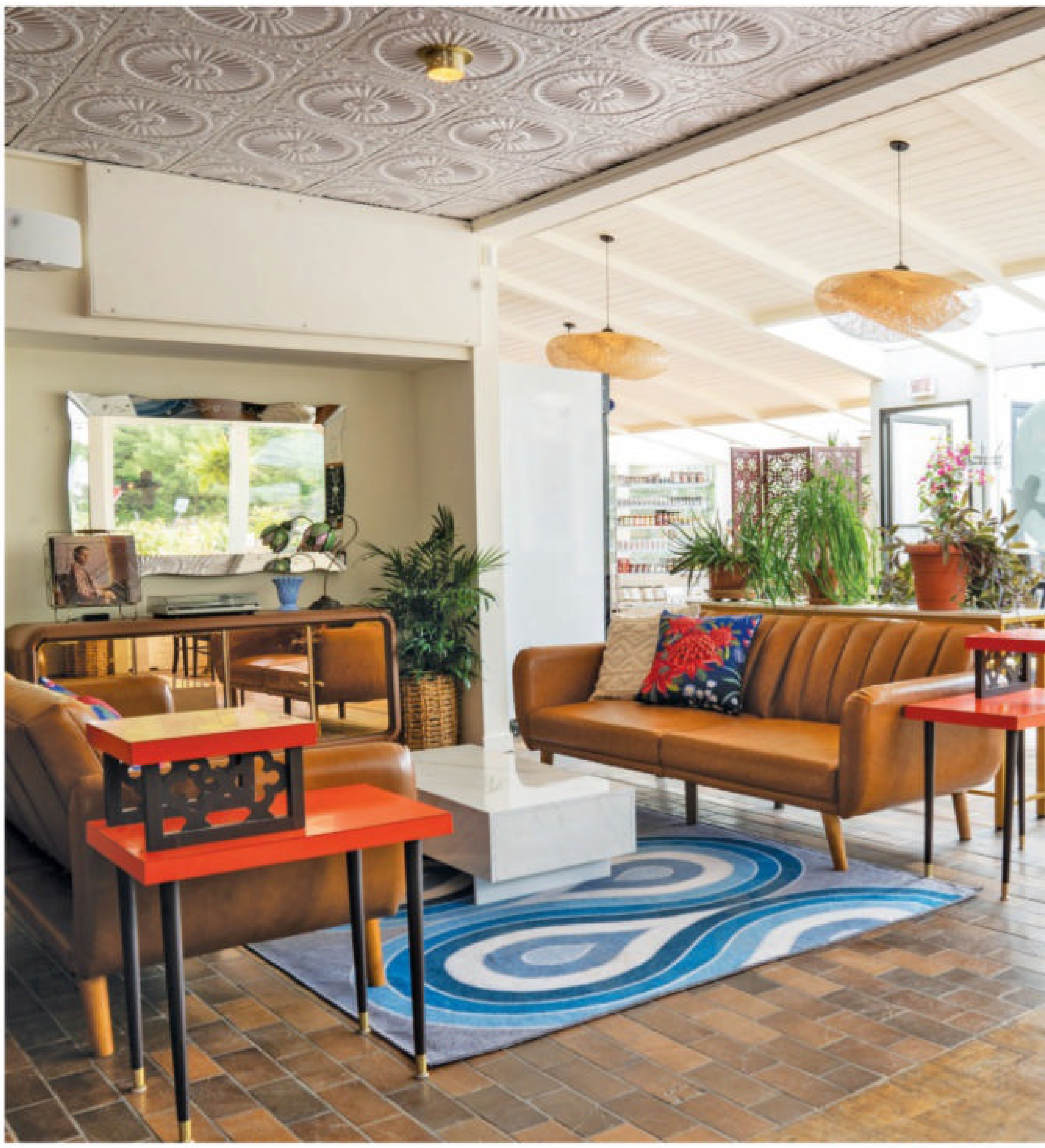
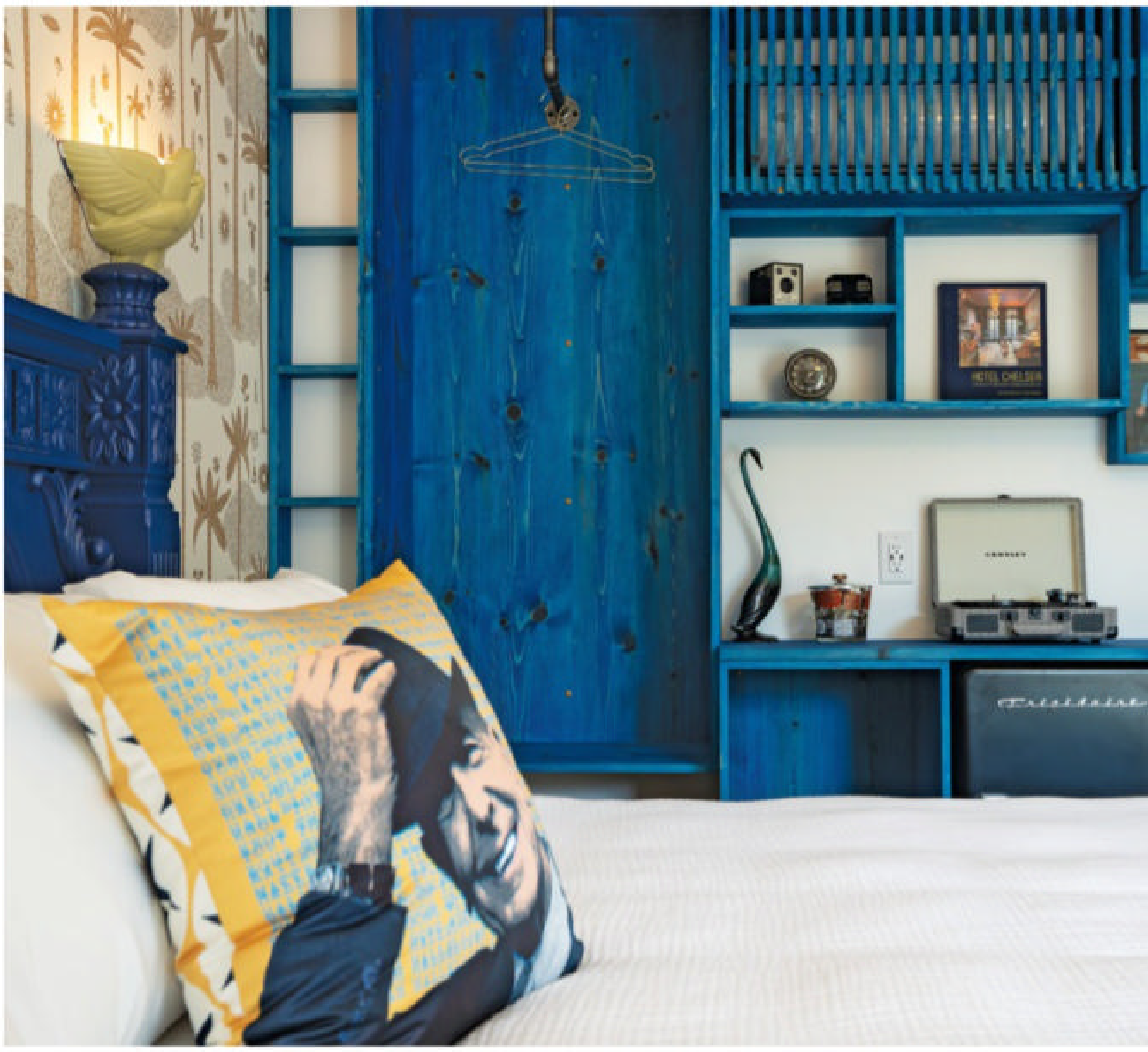
GREAT SPACE

Motel Chelsea

The success of an upscale revamp of a rundown motel is thanks to a fine attention to detail

BY HATTIE KLOTZ





PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSE DELGROSSE - THE CAPITAL COLLECTIVE

Aficionados of mid-century design and high style have a new destination just off the highway between Chelsea and Wakefield: the streetside motel formerly known as Tulip Valley has undergone a complete makeover and reopened as Motel Chelsea.

Una McDonnell, who also owns Le Hibou restaurant in Wakefield, bought the tired property in April 2021. “I had friends on Wolfe Island who had bought a run-down hotel because they wanted to control what happened in their community,” says McDonnell. “I was really excited by this project.”

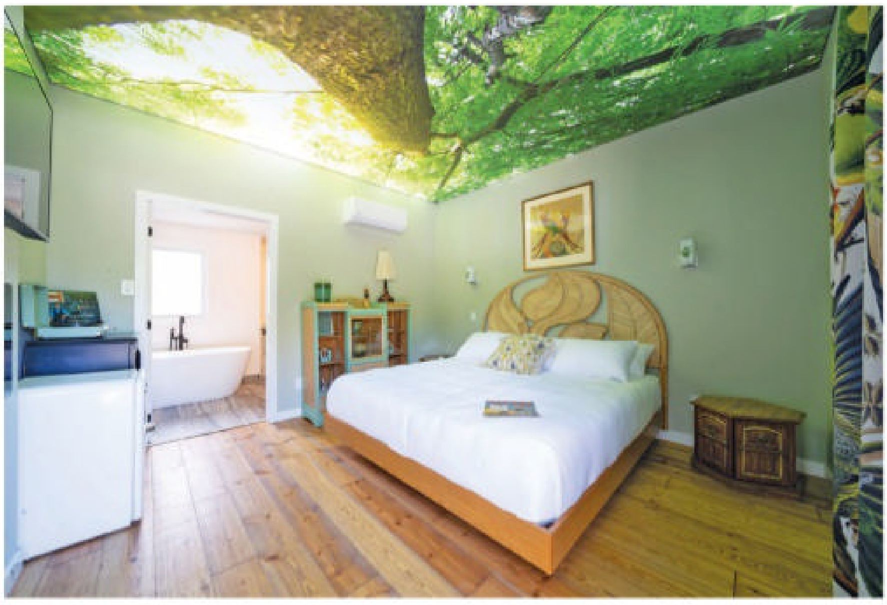
She knew the place needed some love but took the plunge. “It wasn’t until I actually owned it that I saw how much work needed to be done,” says McDonnell.

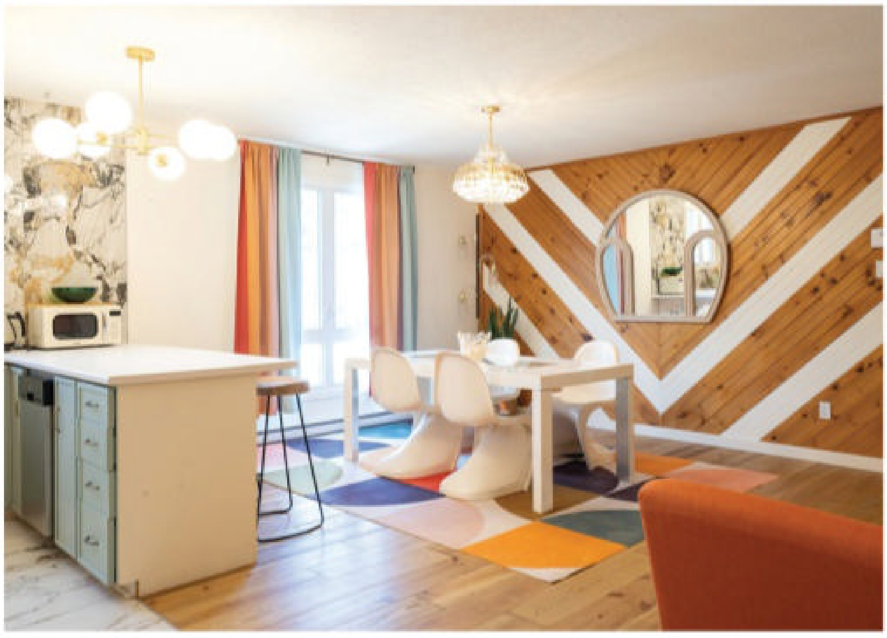
But the new owner dove in, and now Motel Chelsea boasts seven rooms, as well as two apartments. Each room offers a unique design journey: of note is the Leonard Cohen room, complete with masculine accents in deep blue and black, a vintage telephone imported from Berlin (‘First we take Manhattan/ then we take Berlin’), dove-themed bedside sconces (‘Hallelujah’), and a turntable outfitted with Cohen vinyl. Meanwhile, in the Starlite there’s a video installation by award-winning, multi-disciplinary artists STO Union, who are based out of a studio in nearby Farrellton.

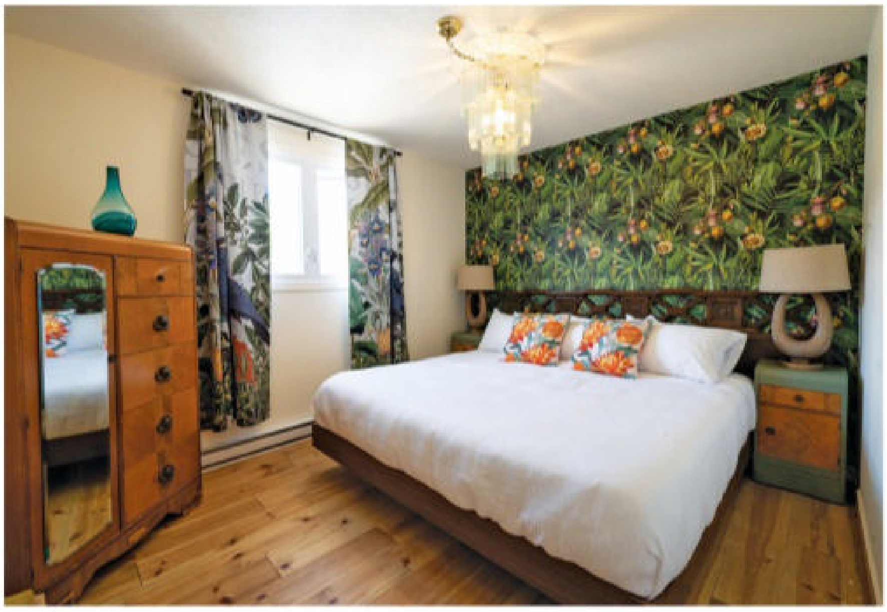
Surprising touches abound. Vintage telephones in every room offer various audio pleasures — the phone in the restaurant plays Bill Withers’ song ‘Lovely Day.’ Vintage viewfinders bring out one’s inner child. There’s a sense of curiosity to the decor, and accent walls are covered with colourful wallpaper. Throughout the building, reclaimed wooden floors from Log’s End bring that cottage feeling.

■ **AT LEFT:** The motel shop, Oiseau Bleu Marché Café, offers cute gourmet treats, books, and locally made creations

■ **THE ROOMS:** Each of the motel's nine units has its own name and decor theme







Then there's the vintage mini Frigidaires, luxury organic mattresses, Dyson hairdryers, organic toiletries in reusable containers — all pleasant changes from what we've come to expect from motels. In the bathroom, you'll find shea body creams made by Ottawa-based Twenty20 and goats' milk soap from Wakefield's Apple Road. In every room, there's a flat-screen television, LED fireplace, and baskets of gourmet treats.

McDonnell, who also works as writer when not running Le Hibou and Motel Chelsea, spent months sourcing furniture and decorative accessories online. "As far as possible, I tried to reuse, repurpose, and reclaim."

In the main salon, McDonnell gave tables a new lease on life by covering them with vibrant flower wallpaper, sealed with lacquer. She replaced other tabletops with giant marble tiles, painted and re-upholstered the original chairs with tweed seats, and brought in booth seating from a pizzeria in Hull. She brightened the bar top with a vibrant orange-red paint and chose a wild, bird-themed wallpaper from Timorous Beasties. There's a well-stocked gourmet store that sells upscale basics and fun treats such as organic soaps, truffle chips, nuts, and chocolate. A giant, stuffed moose head hangs above the reception — one piece of history that stayed when the Tulip became Motel Chelsea.

The restaurant is slowly expanding on its original offerings of soups, salads, and dishes from the Hibou Chez Vous line. What's more, the venue has popped up as live music venue. Popular Canadian acts including the Great Lake Swimmers and Jill Zmud have already graced the small stage; so far, the concerts have come about serendipitously, with friends of friends putting the events in place. But McDonnell says she is open to more in the future.

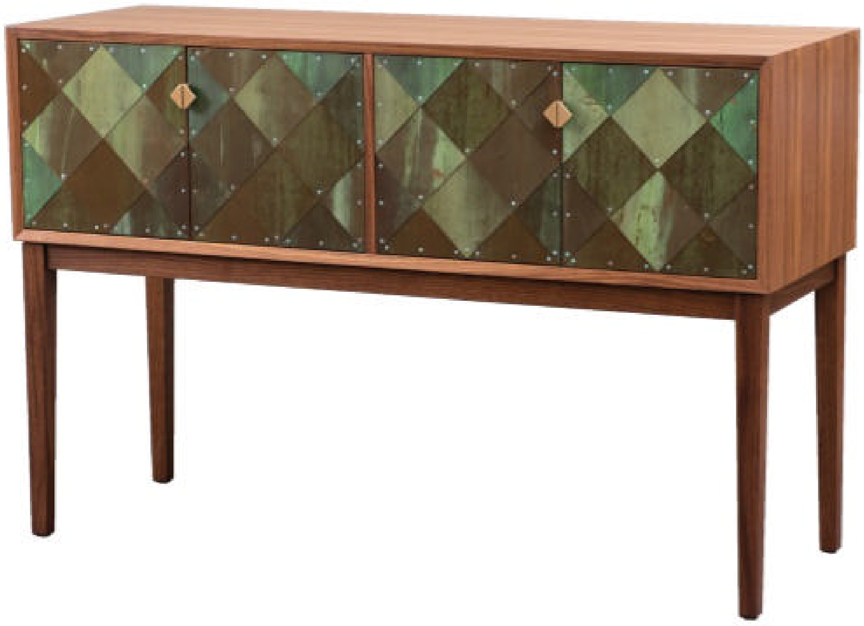
There's more to come, including a private dining room, EV chargers, and an Art-O-Mat machine — an old cigarette dispenser that's been repurposed to sell small pieces of original art by local artists.

A quote from Anthony Bourdain adorns the risers of the stairs to the two apartments, and does well to sum up the vibe: "Travel is about that gorgeous feeling of teetering in the unknown."

Random Desires

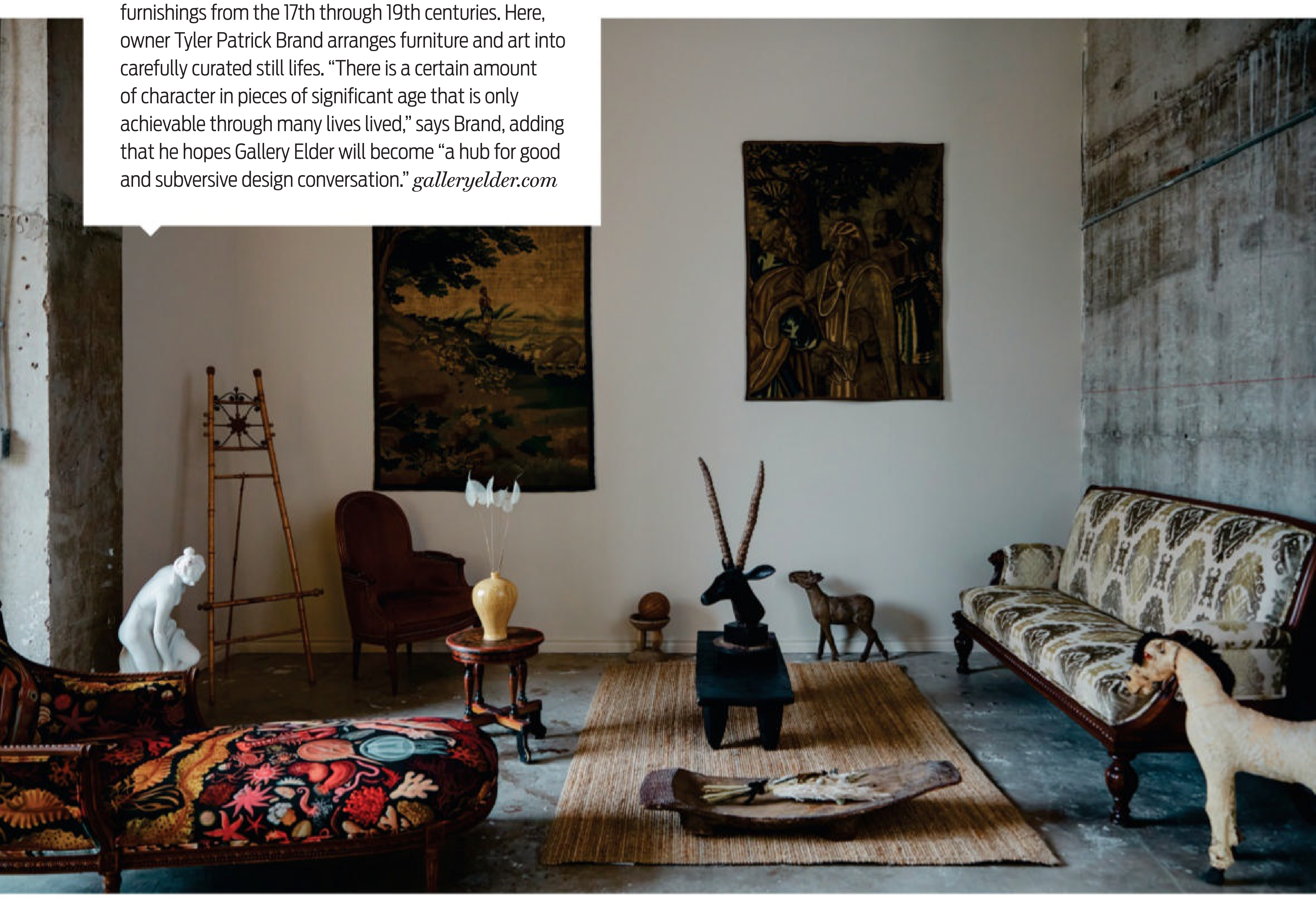
What we love, where to find it, and sometimes why — our curated list of local finds

BY SARAH BROWN

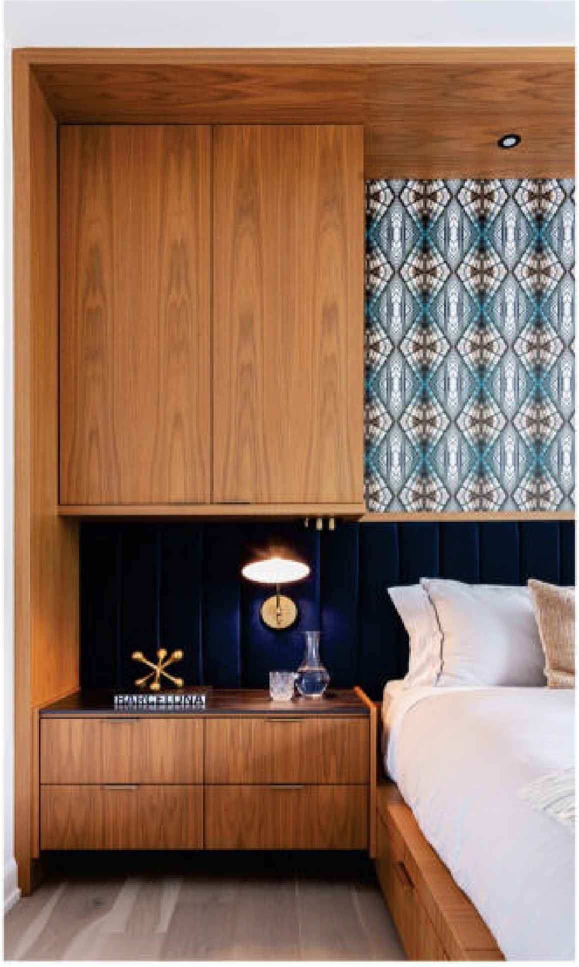


Perfect patina
A few years ago, when the buildings at Parliament Hill were given new roofs, some of the old copper was saved with the hope that someone could find an innovative way to reuse it one day. That someone is furniture designer and maker Christopher Solar, who immediately saw the possibilities for creating patterns with the varied shades of patina. This cabinet is one of a pair installed in the formal foyer of one of Canada's official residences. *christophersolar.com*

Elder statesman
All that's old is new again at Westboro's Gallery Elder, a boutique gallery celebrating the craftsmanship of furnishings from the 17th through 19th centuries. Here, owner Tyler Patrick Brand arranges furniture and art into carefully curated still lifes. "There is a certain amount of character in pieces of significant age that is only achievable through many lives lived," says Brand, adding that he hopes Gallery Elder will become "a hub for good and subversive design conversation." *galleryelder.com*



GALLERY ELDER PHOTO BY RÉMI THÉRIAULT - HOUSE OF COMMON STUDIO

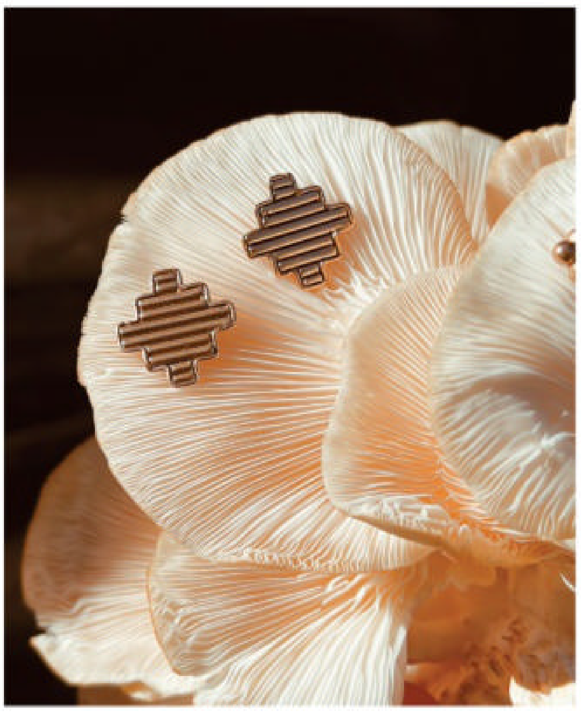


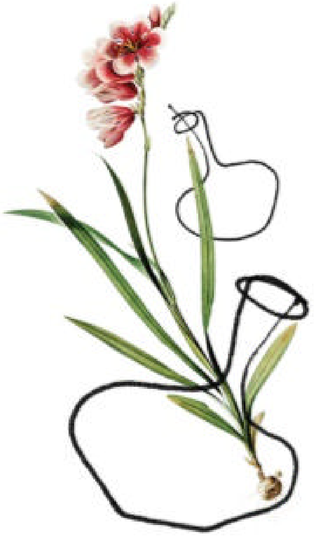
Beauty sleep

The owners were looking for a grown-up bedroom with a nod to mid-century modern and a touch of glam. StyleHaus Interiors delivered in spades. Sleek walnut cabinetry, designed by Jason Bellaire and Denise Hulaj and fabricated by Peter Dutch Cabinetry, frames a tufted headboard in blue velvet. A sophisticated kaleidoscope-inspired wallpaper adds pizazz. *stylehausinteriors.com*

Magic mushrooms

Mushrooms are having a moment. Fabulous fungi have become a muse de jour, popping up here as a backdrop to a new jewellery line by Megan Briggs of Neblina y Noche. The name translates as "fog and night" and is inspired by the fog that descended each evening when she and husband Mathew Lendrum lived in rural Mexico. Briggs pairs oyster mushrooms they'd been growing in their kitchen with bronze-cast earrings in the shape of the Incan cross. "They had been growing alongside each other in our home and were both ready for the world to witness their beauty," she explains. Now located in Perth, the duo collaborate on jewellery and pottery. *shopneblinanoche.com*



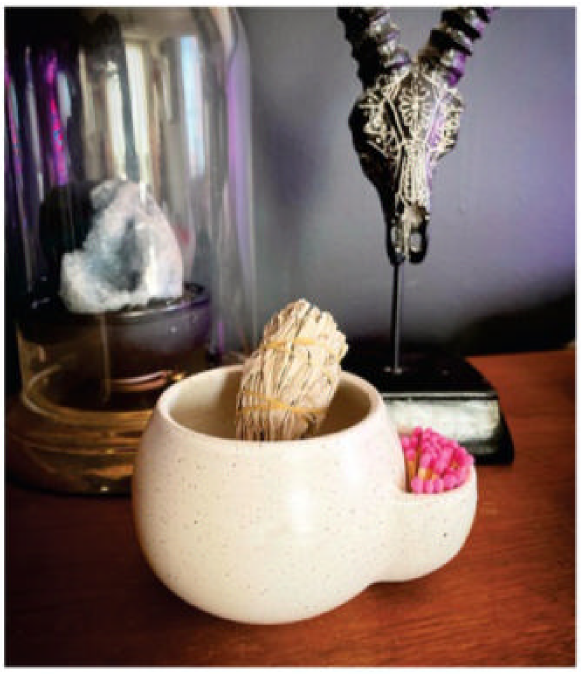


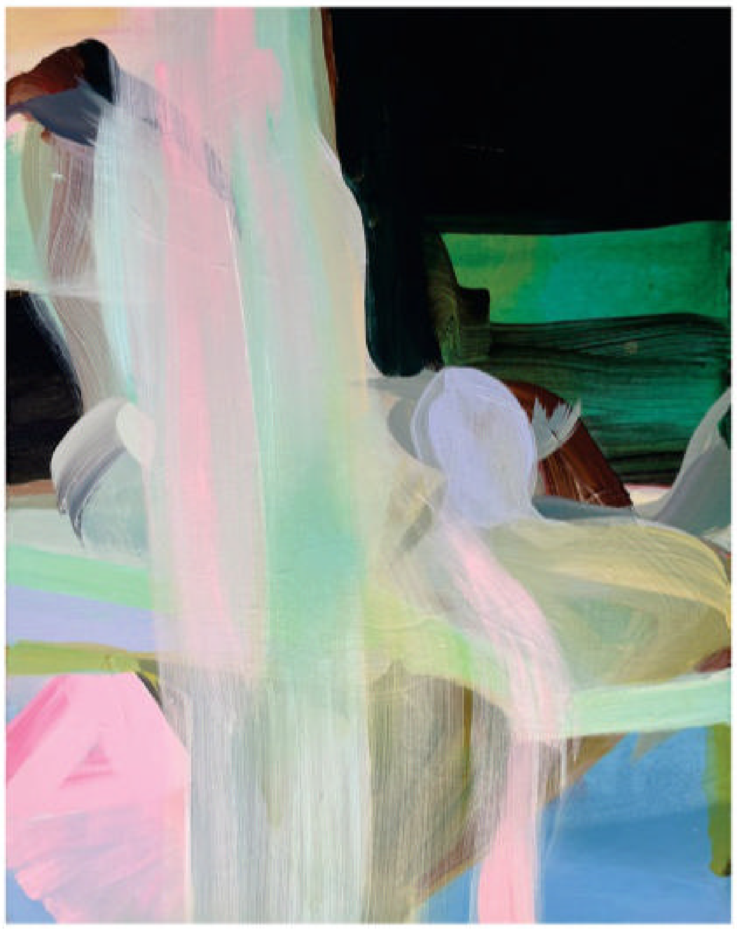
Mix and match

Vintage meets modern in the elegantly whimsical collages of Lori Langille. The artist mixes imagery and illustration to create postcards and other artworks that she sells through her online shop at Lori Langille Studio, as well as at craft shows and through the Papery and the Ottawa Art Gallery shop. The joy of collage, says the illustrator, is about putting things together and seeing how they interact. "I find people really respond to images with humour and a sense of mystery." *lori-langille-studio.myshopify.com*

Breathe easy

She took her first pottery class in 2013 and has never looked back. Christine Chesser's newest design is a stylish burner made with palo santo wood, with a match holder on the side and a tiny area of unglazed clay on which to strike a flame. A traditional remedy for pain, inflammation, and stress, palo santo wood is also believed by many to clear negative energy. As the magazine went to print, Chesser was heading off on a six-month sabbatical of sorts, shutting down her studio and relocating to California to "get grounded" and reinspired. Follow her journey on Instagram *@claypigeondesign* ●





In the abstract

When Alexandra Darbyshire Flood relocated to Ottawa last year, she sent a link to her recent artworks to Studio Sixty Six, where the curators were struck by the strength and sensitivity of her colour palette. "Her paintings make you feel inspired and serene at the same time," writes gallery principal Carrie Colton, in describing the artist's most recent works. For her own part, Darbyshire Flood notes, "My current work is an ongoing conversation around the unknown, decidedly spirited, with titles often suggesting the complex world we live in." We're glad to join the conversation. *studiosixtysix.ca*

STYEHAUS INTERIORS PHOTO BY MARC FOWLER / METROPOLIS STUDIO

Design Insider | By Dayanti Karunaratne

More Homes Built Faster

It's big news for an industry that usually works with the city on zoning parameters. With the contentious **Bill 23**, also known as the More Homes Built Faster Bill, the provincial government has entered the fray of development debates in new and powerful ways.

Among other things, the legislation introduces rules that will override municipalities when it comes to developer fees for new home construction; it also sets out to encourage higher density near transit stations, build on surplus government lands, and support rent-to-own programs and modular homes. With an eye to confront the housing shortage, Doug Ford's team has given the City of Ottawa a clear goal: build 161,000 units by 2031. Mayor Mark Sutcliffe has been given increased autonomy through the bill — he can now pass bylaws with just one-third of council's support. While it technically has already come into effect, the new council was quick to formally challenge the bill, asking the province to delay implementation until they can figure out how the municipality will function without those development fees. But that was after the celebrations of National Housing Day, which saw housing announcements attended by reps from all levels of government, which totalled more than 250 units across the city, most of them affordable and below-market. The federal government has committed $90 million in funding for these local projects.

Some say Bill 23 will produce a boldness that is required for the times; environmentalists point out that conservation authorities are losing clout. No one is contesting the reality of Ontario's housing crisis.

GOHBA Gala

In lighter news, this October this **Greater Ottawa Home Builder's Association** gathered for their annual awards ceremony for the first time since the pandemic. Nearly 700 people flocked to the Shaw Centre for networking and mingling, at a joke-riddled ceremony hosted by comedian James Cunningham of the Food Network's Eat Street. GOHBA executive director Jason Burggraaf said it wasn't just a celebration of new homes and renovations but also "a family reunion."

Highlights from the winners circle include Minto Communities, who took home production builder of the year, and RND Construction, winning custom builder of the year. Amsted Design-Build won renovator of the year for the tenth time, a record for the GOHBAs. Simmonds Architecture took home the most awards — nine in total — while Hobin Architecture garnered eight trophies. Eleven industry experts judged nearly 300 projects in a blind-judging system that awarded winners in 53 categories based on photo submissions and written project descriptions.

The evening also supported the local food industry by focusing on local ingredients and wine, and raised money for Habitat of Humanity through a silent auction.

Giving back

The second annual You Give, We Give fundraising drive held by Hobin Architecture built on its success last year, raising more than $200,000 for Ten Oaks, SPAO, the Odawa Native Friendship Centre, and Centre 507. That total includes $40,000 in matched donations from the longstanding architecture firm.

"The support from Hobin Architecture came at just the right time," says Lux, the executive director at Ten Oaks, an organization than connects children and youth from 2SLGBTQ+ communities through play-based programs. "With increased costs across the board, reductions in available grants, and increased demands on programming, 2022 was a challenging year for many non-profits. Hobin Architecture used their platform to raise the profile of four non-profits, helping us connect to new donors, and remind former donors we are still around."

Says Richard LeBlanc of Centre 507: "The campaign generated 86 first-time donors — by far the largest number of new donors we've ever accumulated during a single campaign. For a small grassroots agency, 86 new donors is huge for us."

Rideau rising

An overlooked building beside the Rideau Centre is getting a new lease on life. Built in 1874, the simple brick building originally housed the city's registry office — a place to store property documents, get hitched, or research one's ancestors. It was built to protect archival materials against fire, flood, and theft, and it has served various purposes over the years. The latest, as the anchor of a 21-storey residence attached to the Rideau Centre, will see the structure relocated 40 metres to the east, to the corner of Daly Avenue and Nicholas Street, and connect directly to the mall. The project will make a big impact in that busy downtown corner.

Sens sense

At press time, the bidding for ownership of the Ottawa Senators was heating up, with the list of potential bidders at about 10 — a list that includes Neil Malhotra of Claridge Homes.

This custom kitchen by Gemstone is part of an opulent project that scored the firm a Canadian Home Builders Association award

GO CANADA

Ottawa was represented well at the **National Housing Awards**, which is hosted by the Canadian Home Builders' Association. "This program isn't just about luxury homes, though there are stunning projects among these finalists," said CHBA CEO Kevin Lee. "It's about capturing the full spectrum of homes and communities that Canadians live in, and all of the planning, creativity, and skill that goes into them. Our industry is present in every community across the country, and we're proud to build and renovate the places Canadians call home."

Gemstone Corporation won three awards in the categories of bathroom reno, basement reno, and whole home renovation over $800,000. Amsted Design-Build was awarded four trophies, while Minto Communities was recognized for its net-zero production home. ●

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City Bites

Perfect Pastry

For pastries that look as good as they taste, check out **Elina Patisserie**. Offering exquisite pastries and jewel-like bonbons, Elina Olefirenko opened her doors just in time for the Christmas season. The former pastry instructor at Algonquin College continues to teach pastry making and other delicate skills at Le Cordon Bleu. There are plans afoot for chocolate classes at her shop. *443A Sussex Dr.*

City Bites Insider | By Hattie Klotz

Shake it

A new concept milkshake bar, **For God Shakes** is owned by Sushen Kakkar, a graduate of the hospitality program at Algonquin College. Kakkar was inspired by social media feeds of similar milkshake bars in Miami and is offering more than 30 flavours such as Oreo Blast, Smarties do Parties, Refreshing Mint, Cotton Candy, and Mango Tango in glass bottles or Mason jars. Toppings are part of the fun — depending on the flavour, expect sprinkles, cookies, brownies, or fresh fruit. The cozy space offers seating to enjoy your sweet treat, plus plated food such as pancakes and cheesecake. Kakkar also offers lactose-free and vegan shakes, and no artificial syrups are used in the confections. 204 Dalhousie St.

YKO 2.0

YKO BBQ Chicken — Ottawa's original chicken barbecue shop — now has a second location in the ByWard Market. The takeout only spot began on Charlotte Street over 20 years ago. Owned by Yre Coulibaly, her sister Ramata, and mother Sita Sanogo, their new location is filling the neighbourhood with the deeply comforting smell of a charcoal grill. 263 Dalhousie St.

Pink pride

Luxe Blooms Flower Café continues to flourish. The vibrant boutique flower shop that also serves tea, cocktails, specialty coffee, cakes, pastries, sandwiches, and other light snacks is now selling bespoke candles. That's in addition to their everlasting rose blooms. Lineups often stretch down the block. 254 Dalhousie St.

Coffee plus

At **Zups**, you'll find a new kind of coffee — one that'll give you more than a buzz. **Mushup** is a Montreal-based coffee company that creates grinds with targeted health benefits, thanks to extracts of medicinal mushrooms such as reishi, cordyceps, lion's mane, and chaga. This should put a spring in your coffee-powered step. They've also partnered with Martin Picard, the Montreal chef famous for his restaurant Au Pied du Cochon. Zups will be carrying Au Pied du Cochon goodies in their French-Canadian grocer. 55 ByWard Market Sq.

Chefs on screen

Marysol Foucault, chef-owner of now-closed Chez Edgar, has taken to the small screen. She's been shooting a commercial for Bertolli olive oil as well as a series of videos for former customers who are nostalgic for Chez Edgar's meals. Follow Marysol on Edgar's Facebook page to see her making spicy cretons, tourtère, and nuns' farts, among other favourites. Meanwhile, **Harriet Clunie** aka the Wandering Chef, formerly of Das Lokal, has been busy preparing food to star in the Food Network's romantic comedy *One Delicious Christmas*: stream it on Crave TV.

FOR GOD
SHAKES

Topped with lemon-lavender cheesecake, whipped cream, and sprinkles, the Lemon Lavender shake is among the many sweet treats at For God Shakes

Dollars to Doughnuts

Recently, **Suzy Q** doughnuts made an Instagram post about rising costs. It should come as no surprise to anyone that good food simply costs more these days. And, so it is with doughnuts too. Prices have gone up across the board, but some — the fancy flavours — more than others. But given the comments and votes of support, it looks like Suzy Q customers will just keep coming. Yes, they're that good. 969 Wellington St. W.

Rooted on Richmond

Split Tree Cocktail Co. has opened its first retail location. The beautiful store was designed by Julie Thompson, wife of company founder Steve Morrier. Split Tree, a manufacturer of small-batch, handcrafted non-alcoholic cocktails and soda mixes, plans to use the space to host workshops. Goodies for sale include everything for the budding mixologist, such as vintage barware, ingredients for charcuterie boards, and even cocktail-scented candles. 98-J Richmond Rd.

Chelsea changes

Old Chelsea is changing faster than the weather in Ottawa. As major new developments bring more residents to the formerly sleepy village, food choices just keep expanding. **Petit Bar à Vin** (168 ch. Old Chelsea) opened during the summer, while Gatineau-based **Olivia Bistro** (193 ch. Old Chelsea) opened its fifth location offering healthy salads, tacos, smoothies, and stuffed avocados, as well as prepared foods to take away. Just next door, **La Trappe à Fromage** (193 ch. Old Chelsea) is now open, offering extensive delicatessen foods, including a large cheese counter, fresh bread, prepared foods, mustards, vinaigrettes, crackers and olive oils.

QUICK BITES

- No shortage of options for pastry lovers these days. There's **Amandine** (1175 Wellington St. W.), a classic French patisserie, and **Hugo** (399 Bank St.), which is located within Social Thai and is attracting foodies with its Supreme Croissants — croissants stuffed with flavoured cream cheese mousse and drizzled with chocolate.

- A new Asian grocery store has opened in the Byward Market in the former Home Hardware store. **Universal Grocery** offers specialties from the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, as well as your basic needs. 140 George St.

- From the kitchen to the screen and back again, former Top Chef Canada winner **Rene Rodriguez** has taken the reins as chef at the Albion Rooms.

- After a fire in the spring of 2022, **Shinka Sushi** has been out of a home, moving from kitchen to kitchen. Now they've settled in a giant warehouse in the east end, ready to deliver sumptuous sushi platters across the city. 2900 Sheffield Rd.

- In the depths of winter, comfort food is a winner. What can be better than fondue? Creamy cheese, hunks of meat, or sweet melted chocolate are now on the menu every Tuesday night at **Absinthe**. Available until the mercury rises. 1208 Wellington St. W.

- Sad news for diners who love eating locally sourced, regionally inspired fine food. **Gray Jay**, the restaurant of chef Dominique Dufour and her husband, Devon Bionda, has closed. So too, has **Ola Cocina**, that tiny, colourful Mexican restaurant in Vanier, owned and run by Donna Chevrier, a community builder and veteran of the Ottawa food scene. ●

Food for Thought | The case for paid sick days

As the food industry continues to rebuild following the pandemic, **Jessica Carpinone** argues that attracting talented, committed people means prioritizing wellness

IN 2012, I WAS WORKING AT a well-respected restaurant in the ByWard Market when I saw my kitchen colleague suddenly leave the line. It was not unusual for a cook to exit in the middle of service for a quick cigarette — often the only way to get a break — but I could tell this was different. When he returned to the kitchen, his face was pale. With order chits piling up, I asked him if he was okay.

"I've been vomiting," he said tersely. We continued working side by side until the end of the night. Not knowing how contagious this stomach bug was, I could only hope that the rest of the kitchen crew and our customers would make it out unharmed.

Nothing about this incident was unusual. Anyone working in food service has similar war stories. A lack of paid sick days makes working while sick the norm.

I opened my bakery in 2013 after realizing that I would have a better shot at making a career as a baker by being self-employed. By the time COVID hit, my bakery was in its seventh year and had grown to 12 employees. It quickly became clear that this event was going to affect our industry in a big way. Sure enough, the pandemic was a tipping point for workers; they left the industry in droves for safer jobs and better conditions. Many of them realized that their health was more important than their job.

Since I opened Bread By Us, I have been offering employees paid sick days. Yes, this is an expense, but it is part of a healthy workplace culture. The proof lies in the fact that we have retained the majority of our staff throughout the pandemic, our business is still operating, and we have never had a workplace COVID outbreak.

The government of Ontario introduced mandatory paid sick days into the Employment Act in 2017 — a mere two days, but still something. However, that plan was scrapped by the Ford government. The call for legislated paid sick days in Ontario has been loud and continuous throughout the pandemic, both from workers and from the broader public. But despite unprecedented public pressure, very little has changed. Opposition parties have tried numerous times to pass paid-sick-day legislation, but it has been repeatedly shut down. Most recently, the NDP tabled another paid-sick-days bill in November 2022, which also had the support of the Liberals. It was voted down by the Progressive Conservatives.

Our food service industry can't afford to miss this opportunity. There are unprecedented labour shortages (170,000 vacancies, according to Restaurants Canada) and advocates are calling for "streamlined immigration" programs to deal with the problem. But recruiting newcomers to fill the labour shortage does not address the root cause of the problem: these jobs suck.

It doesn't have to be this way, and some small businesses are forging ahead with another vision for the industry. Several are right here in Ottawa. They recognize the positive impacts — to their bottom line, yes, but also more broadly — of good, stable jobs. "As an industry, it's imperative we normalize paid sick days. Food service has long been considered a transitional job and if we want more talent to stay, we need to offer enticing careers," explains Liz Mok, owner of Moo Shu Ice Cream in Centretown.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MERRITT DECLOUX

To business owners hesitant to offer paid sick days, Mok suggests they rethink the way they look at the issue.

"In other expense categories, businesses are accustomed to paying more for higher quality, consistency, and predictability. Why is this not applied to labour? Not offering paid sick days doesn't prevent workers from getting sick. It only takes damage control out of your hands when workers feel pressured to work while unwell. Smart businesses build reasonable disruptions into their operations, and people getting sick is one very predictable one."

Rebuilding the food service industry without prioritizing decent work would just drag our industry further into chaos. The only way forward is to rethink an industry built on temporary, precarious labour. Whatever comes next in the food service industry needs to be centred around decent jobs, ones that can evolve into careers.

The food service industry is not the only place where paid sick leave is elusive, but it occupies a special position in the business landscape. For one, there is a measured desire to have a great local food scene, but there are not enough people willing to work in it. In addition, given our proximity to food, our health is of public concern. Frankly, keeping sick food service workers out of kitchens is a no-brainer.

Jessica Carpinone is the co-owner of Bread by Us Bakery in Hintonburg. She is also a member of the Better Way Alliance, a network of businesses advocating for decent work. Follow her on Twitter @breadbyus

Drink | Ray Tang

Ray Tang is an alchemist. Lucky for Ottawa, he's also one of three owners of Stolen Goods, a new and exciting addition to the city's cocktail scene. **Yvonne Langen** talks to the ambitious bartender about unique concoctions — and what his place can offer

TUCKED INTO AN UNSUSPECTING NOOK on Sparks Street near Metcalfe, you'll find a sexy and austere 21-seat cocktail bar that may remind you of award-winning watering holes in more metropolitan destinations like Montreal or New York. That similarity is very much by design: Tang and co-owners Mike Campbell and Adam Ghor drew inspiration from some of their favourite haunts like Cloakroom in Montreal.

Always open until 2 a.m., Stolen Goods is one of the few available destinations for late-night libations.

Tang has been in the business for six years. He first discovered a passion for craft cocktails while barbacking at Mati, and expanded on the tricks of the trade he learned there through independent study. Dave Arnold's book *Liquid Intelligence* was a seminal text. The author's scientific approach to cocktails and use of advanced technique subverted diners' expectations of flavour. "When you think of food," says Tang, "there's a textural component, a bite to it. But if you can turn that flavour into liquid form, that's a different sensory experience." After reading Arnold's book, Tang began to dream up spirited takes on savoury dishes.

There are a couple of direct nods to food in the 18 or so cocktails found on the Stolen Goods menu. Their opening menu featured a high-concept cocktail called the "Three Brothers," inspired by Ottawa's favourite late-night snack, shawarma. To translate that uniquely potent blend of garlic and spices into cocktail form, Tang performed a garlic fat wash on gin — an old perfumer's technique of infusing something oily into alcohol — and balanced that intense flavour with pickled beet and turnip juices, lime, and simple syrup.

"It confuses you, it makes you think," says Tang. "The garlic gin is pretty bad on its own but when combined with the other ingredients, it really works."

When asked what he hopes departing guests would say , he responds simply, "It's the best cocktail bar, in the city, by far."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY YVONNE LANGEN/TASTE & TIPPLE

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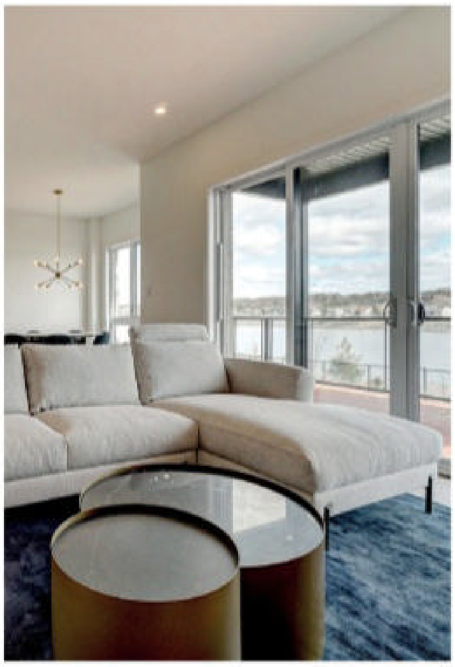

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Where to Eat Now

Sumptuous setting: The decadent redesign at Cocotte Bistro in the Metcalfe Hotel matches the menu. Rich French cooking, and an upscale drinks menu bring a welcome new entrant to the downtown fine dining scene

Cocotte Bistro

Cocotte Bistro, 123 Metcalfe St., cocottebistro.com

Chef Stephen La Salle brings has taken his talents from one hotel restaurant, Feast + Revel in the Andaz, and started anew in the freshly renovated Metcalfe Hotel's Cocotte Bistro. Cocotte serves up classic French cuisine in portions designed to be shared. Mains range from $20 to $54 and run the gamut from a vegan cassoulet to a filet mignon.

The décor is as sumptuous as the menu with a spacious dining room and bar featuring rich textures of wood, stone, and velvet.

Sparkling cocktails and sours feature prominently on the drinks list – with a negroni and old fashioned on offer for those craving a more spirituous sipper. The two cocktails I sampled, a riff on the sidecar and a limoncello/vodka sour, were tasty but a touch too sweet.

As you might expect, decadence abounds on the dinner menu – cheese, baked brie, and truffle grilled cheese all populate the appetizer list.

To start, I share the salmon tartare and foie gras parfait with my dining companion. On the tartare, there's herbes de provence and lavender-cured salmon finely diced with ratatouille vegetables. Topped with chives and served with crostini, this thoughtfully orchestrated dish allows each delicate flavour to sing. The portion is large and best shared amongst two or more diners, or enjoyed as a main with a side of frites.

The foie gras parfait is silky and rich, and the accompaniments make La Salle's interpretation stand apart. Whipped foie gras is adorned with pistachios, a briny gherkin, and sweet-tart passionfruit mustard — this last element is unexpected and divine. While I'm all for a spirit of generosity, this dish would be best enjoyed in a portion half the size – in its current quantity, the decadence overwhelms.

Moving onto the mains, braised veal cheeks and arctic char meunière were the order of the day. Succulent Quebec veal cheeks nestled into a creamy blanquette sauce with oyster mushrooms, peas, Brussels sprouts, and dill. A theme emerges; this dish is similarly oversized.

I'm a firm believer that fish is best enjoyed undercooked and so was pleased that the arctic chair meunière was moist and flaky on the exterior but neared raw and wet at its dense center. Roasted hazelnuts offer welcome textural diversity against the fish, as well as the beets and pearl couscous on the plate.

The marquee dessert is the Ottawa-Brest, an amalgam of a classic Paris-Brest and a Beavertail – fried choux pastry filled with maple and walnut praline, dusted with cinnamon sugar and a squeeze of lemon. It's a great concept but the result is cloying and chewy.

On the whole, Cocotte Bistro is a formidable entrant to the capital food scene but a little restraint on portion size and richness would make the decadence that much more enjoyable.

— Yvonne Langen

PHOTOGRAPH BY MELODY MALONEY

Petit Bar à Vin
168 chem. Old Chelsea, QC

The little chalet near the entrance to Hendrick Farm has seen a number of restaurants come and go over the years. Hopefully, Le Petit Bar à Vin is here to stay.

The restaurant opened in May 2022 and has about 20 seats indoors and more on a large outdoor deck with views south to Ottawa. As its name suggests, it is primarily a wine bar, but serves simple, good food too; it makes a fun place to stop on your way in or out of Gatineau Park.

Our evening begins with a glass of prosecco, always a good way to start. It ends with our table having tried wines from Quebec, Portugal, Spain, Lebanon, and Chile. While each was a small tasting quantity, a fair amount of food was needed to complement the wine. We chose a delicious duck confit sandwich, oozing with melted cheese and fatty duck tucked between toasted sourdough, accompanied by a salad and a tangy plum chutney, as well as a tasting board. The board is a still life of cold cuts, cheeses, smoked fish, bread, chutneys, mustards, dried fruit and pickles, artistically displayed and sourced locally as far as possible. Charcuterie comes from Les Vilains Garçons in Hull, cheese from La Trappe à Fromage in Gatineau, smoked fish from La Boucanerie Chelsea, bread from Roberto Pizza Romana in Chelsea, and desserts from Maison Oddo in Gatineau.

Through the winter, owner Jean-François Bilodeau plans to introduce a more extensive hot menu, including French onion soup and locally made pâté en croûte à l'ancienne. The menu will expand with the seasons. Also in the works are guest chef events, garden parties, and wine tastings.

Bilodeau works with about 20 different wine agencies to build the extensive list. Thanks to the passion and knowledge he shared with us during our Tuesday night visit, it's my bet that these events will be both fun and educational. (Watch for Bilodeau's wine truck during the summer, and follow on Facebook for event announcements.) — *Hattie Klotz* ●

Petit Bar à Vin

Meet the sisters making the next generation of family heirlooms

Stephanie and Lindsay Appotive are the second generation taking charge of the well-loved local fine jewellery stores Howard Fine Jewellers and True Bijoux. Located a few steps from Parliament Hill, these two local gems shine brightly. The sisters embrace the 55-year legacy as Ottawa's most trusted jeweller. A family business that expresses a deep appreciation for its client relationships, and a love of fine craftsmanship and design, makes the perfect recipe for creating beautiful jewellery.

Opened in 1967, Howard is now well established in its flagship store at the historic corner of Bank and Sparks. Beyond the luxurious showroom, you will find a world-class, on-site custom jewellery factory, gemmological laboratory, authorized Rolex service centre, jewellery repair and restoration department.

Strolling by the store's grand building, you might think that Howard only caters to a certain price point and above, but nothing could be further from the truth. The sisters love to say that "nothing is ever too small or too big for us."

"We want to be a part of our clients' jewellery journey, and that really means we are here for everything — whether someone needs a broken chain fixed, a ring to be cleaned and checked (a complimentary service) or help to select a magnificent celebration piece," says Stephanie.

"We have many conversations about why a design found online may not be the right choice for an everyday piece," Stephanie says. "We love working from a client's inspiration, and we rely on our master jewellers' skills to translate that inspiration into a piece made with the highest structural integrity, ensuring each piece can shine for generations."

An expert in the field, Howard also has diamond and gemstone brokers in-house with special access to an international diamond bourse with every imaginable combination. Meet one-on-one with an expert who can advise and collaborate with you to create your dream piece with competitive pricing.

Adding to their repertoire in 2006, the family opened True Bijoux to reach more jewellery lovers in a more eclectic way. Lindsay presides over the carefully curated wonderland of vintage pre-owned, affordable engagement rings and a large collection of unique jewellery. "I love creating magic," she says.

Now, well into their 70s, the sister's parents — Howard and Sharron — love to come to work whenever they can. "We're very grateful because not everybody gets to work side by side with their parents," Lindsay says. They've also had the fortune of working with their uncle David and aunt Sharon.

Stephanie remembers father sitting in his office at his computer with his grandson in his lap. "I remember my father teaching my sister and me when we were little, so it was the sweetest moment to see history repeating itself right before my eyes."

Aside from getting to work together every day, the sisters' favourite thing is their bond with their clients. Jewellery holds a special meaning, often marking a milestone. "We have the privilege of being invited into these very personal celebrations," says Stephanie.

The sisters acknowledge that it might be a little intimidating coming into Howard. Sometimes the added security gets mistaken for formality. Stephanie emphasizes that all are welcome, and if you come in, you'll see how warm everyone really is. "Just come as you are. It's our home; we want to invite you in," she says. The store is even dog-friendly.

To see what it's all about for yourself, pop over to the Sparks Street stores. Or, look at the selection of jewellery from the comfort of your home by visiting Howard and True Bijoux online and staying up to date with their Instagram or Facebook profiles.

Created for Howard Fine Jewellers and True Bijoux

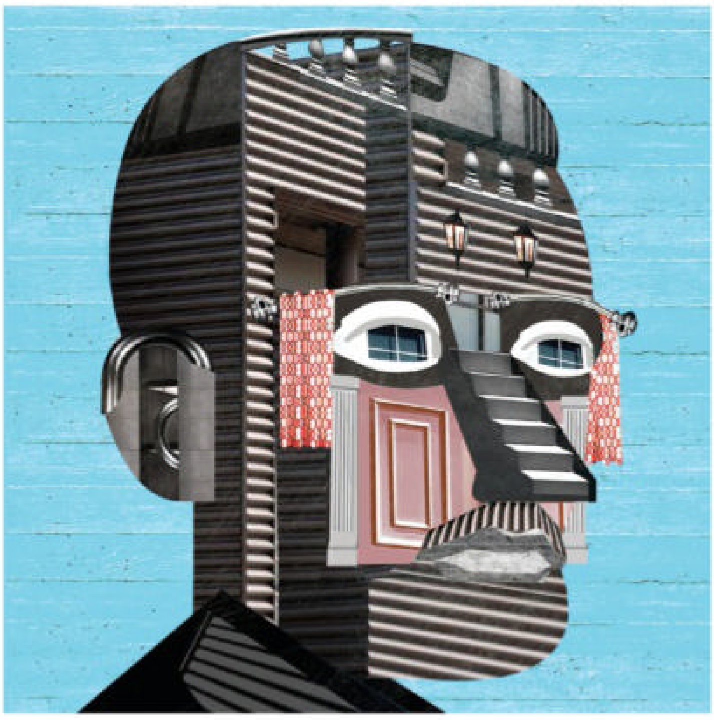

ILLUSTRATION BY ANTHONY TREMMAGLIA

WHEN I WAS A KID, CTV AIRED A SHOW called Here Come the Seventies. It was thrilling — and not just because the opening credits featured the nude backside of a woman walking into the ocean. The program looked forward to the future with excitement, rather than the fear we now collectively practice.

In the 1960s and ’70s, Ottawa was transformed by a large number of office buildings emblematic of this forward-looking period. Recently, the federal government and private industry have started to reconsider these structures — think of the Lester B. Pearson building, Place du Portage, and the old CBC Building on Bronson. I think it’s fair to say we have learned many things since these places were first conceived, such as the need for a convivial pedestrian environment in ways that architects of the time were not interested in.

But I admire the muscularity and boldness of vision these projects embodied. These clients and architects had the courage of strong convictions — and the means to realize them. It is almost impossible to imagine any of the projects I have cited being realized today in such a dramatic manner.

This legacy is both problematic (lousy energy performance, for example) and an important opportunity: almost every one of these buildings has been, or will be, in need of reconstruction. Failing facades must be repaired or replaced; mechanical, electrical, and structural systems must be updated to meet design and sustainable design standards. And then there is the whole work-from-home conundrum. COVID has completely upended the demand for office space and has altered the vocation of “the office.”

These renovation projects offer exciting opportunities to reimagine these buildings. In many cases these transformations are extensive and demand the building be reconsidered as a whole. An extreme makeover, if you will.

As an architect, this situation presents interesting challenges. But it’s also an exciting moment in the city as we witness its metamorphosis. Office buildings are possibly the most important sites we work with today. We should think of them as man-made territories — valuable resources with huge potential and many positive attributes. For example, the buildings of the ’60s and ’70s are often situated near the core and existing transit; if we renovate them — rather than tear down and build anew — they are environmentally friendly. And they are readily accommodating of change, because they were designed to be that way. With well-proportioned floor areas that have good access to natural light, these buildings can become dwellings.

This is a massive and important opportunity for the city. A tally of commercially owned buildings built between 1960 and 1980 in downtown Ottawa comes to almost seven million square feet of usable area. If we add federally owned properties, there is perhaps 10 million square feet of space to consider. That’s 50 acres within the core that’s in the process of redevelopment. A mere 10 per cent of this area could create 2,000 apartments.

When I was studying architecture, these were the buildings my classmates and I loved to hate. We thought they were boring and decried them as embodiments of corporate values and government malaise. But now I deeply appreciate them. I value the restraint and discipline that was put into architecture of the era; it often comes across as boring but is really very hard to pull off. At their best, they create a calm background to work and life that can be appreciated in our contemporary environment: filled with so much visual and mental noise, exacerbated today by building designs obsessed with novelty as a design principle. (Funky shapes and randomly disposed patterns are two symptoms of this disease.)

A department known as the Federal Heritage Building Review Office has protected many federally owned office buildings built approximately 50 years ago, but there is a continuing risk to the design integrity of many others. That’s because they don’t look like heritage buildings that demand care, so they are sometimes subjected to well-meaning interventions. Architects and politicians will describe them as “bunkers” when they want to destroy them. But their rehabilitation creates a fascinating cultural opportunity to engage with their designs in ways that both respect and challenge the tenets on which they were based. ●

Martin Tite is a principal and architect at GRC Architects, located in Ottawa. He lives with his wife in a ’70s apartment building.

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